STUDIES IN
RECENT ADVENTISM

HENRY C. SHELDON

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STUDIES IN RECENT ADVENTISM

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PREFACE

COMMUNICATIONS from pastors who were under pressure to deal with radical types of Adventist teaching suggested the writing of this treatise. We were led by the testimonies submitted to entertain the conviction that a compact essay, combining orderly exposition with well-grounded criticism, would fulfill a useful office.

We have aimed at simplicity, but the variety of teaching which has found place within the ranks of a pronounced Adventism makes some degree of complexity unavoidable in any comprehensive treatment of the subject.

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INTRODUCTION

In some form the doctrine of the future coming of Christ is part and parcel of the common Christian creed. The distinction of "Adventism," as the term is here used, lies in the following particulars: It treats the second coming, or prospective advent, of Christ as a matter of foremost importance in the Christian system; it insists that all Christians should contemplate this great event with vivid expectancy, as being in all probability close at hand, if not indeed certain to occur at a near-by specific date; it regards the looked-for coming as pre-millennial, that is, antecedent to the thousand-year period mentioned in Rev. xx. 4, 5; it rates this coming as the indispensable condition of any such triumphs of the Christian religion as are to be associated with the millennial age.

Champions of Adventism in the sense of our discussion often call themselves pre-millennialists. But this term, while it names one feature, is an inadequate description of those whom we have in mind. It is quite possible to hold that the second coming of Christ will antedate the millennium, without either minifying the possibilities of the present dispensation or greatly magnifying the religious efficacy of the second coming. Indeed, not a few pre-millennialists in their total standpoint have had no close affiliation with typical Adventism, and cannot with historic justice be named among its advocates.

A special era as respects the vigorous advocacy of the doctrinal particulars included in Adventism was initiated in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. This era came to a relative close near the end of the century, so far as the outcropping of a pronounced Adventism in the older

and larger communions is concerned. Since that time, however, propagandism of an Adventist scheme has been vigorously carried on by certain sects or parties, and has claimed, besides, some earnest advocates in the larger denominations. We find, therefore, adequate reasons for including in our review the period from the beginning of the second quarter of the nineteenth century to the present.

As is intimated in the above statement, our theme has to do with Adventist teaching for the given period —with teaching outside the ranks of those currently styled "Adventists," as well as with that which has issued from those ranks. On the score of scholarly basis Adventist teaching in the former range might fairly claim the larger measure of attention. The number of its representatives has also been appreciable. In Great Britain and America it has been advocated by such writers as W. Cunninghame, E.

Bickersteth, A. Bonar, H. Bonar, J. Cumming, E. B. Elliott, T. R. Birks, H. G. Guinness, J. H. Frere, G. Duffield, D. T. Taylor, J. Seiss, S. Tyng, N. West, G. N. H. Peters, and A. J. Gordon. Many others, if not committed to the full Adventist scheme, have given assent to some of its main elements. Here belong the eminent German theologians, Rothe, Delitzsch, Hofmann, Kurtz, Karsten, Auberlen, Beck, Thiersch, Nitzsch, Lange, Ebrard, and Luthardt, together with Van Oosterzee, of the Netherlands. So far as we have been able to discover, very little inclination has been manifested by the writers in the group last mentioned to dabble with figures for the purpose of fixing the time of the second advent.

The movement which resulted in the Adventist sects—of which the Seventh-Day Adventists and the Advent Christians are the principal—may be said to have had its starting

point in the public lectures of William Miller in 1831. It was his confident expectation that Christ would come in 1843. After the close of that year he was constrained to extend the time to the autumn of 1844. At first there was no thought of organizing a special Adventist communion. Miller and his associates addressed their message to the Christian public at large, and gained their following in the communions already in the field. Uncommon activity was displayed in spreading the exciting message. Speaking of the summer of 1843 a historian of the Advent movement says: "The works of Miller, Litch, Jones, Ward, Hall, Bliss, Storrs, F. G. Brown, Whiting, G. F. Cox, Starkweather, Fleming, Fitch, Hawley, Himes, Sabine, and others, together with critical reviews of the chief opponents, were being extensively circulated throughout the American continent, in Europe and Asia, and to all missionary sta-

tions of the British and American missions with which communication could be had. Vessels sailing from Boston and New York, for all foreign ports, were liberally supplied with publications to distribute wherever they went. Tracts were published in the French and German languages, bearing this message, and freely scattered among those portions of society in this country."[1]

Very nearly contemporary with the beginning of the Millerite movement, two different parties arose in England which manifested a rather vital interest in Adventism. These were the Plymouth Brethren and the Irvingites. The Mormons, who began their career in the United States at the same time, made room for a full Adventist scheme; but in reality they were much more concerned about the prospective rule of the Latter Day Saints in the earth

[1] I. C. Wellcome, History of the Second Advent Message and Mission, Doctrine and People, p. 304.

than about the events more generally supposed to be connected with the second advent.

In spite of the failure of the Millerite predictions, and of other confident forecasts respecting the close of the dispensation, Adventism lived on with a good degree of stubborn persistence. Even the habit of "fixing the time" was not fully vanquished. In exceptional instances it has been carried over into the twentieth century. A conspicuous example appears in C. T. Russell, whose writings, if the figures on the title pages may be trusted, have been circulated to the extent of several million volumes.

CHAPTER I

FEATURES COMMONLY INCLUDED IN RECENT ADVENTISM

1. *Assumption of the incompetency of ordinary means of evangelism to convert the world.* This assumption runs through Adventist literature of the type which we are considering. Repeatedly the thesis is put forward that the preaching of the gospel cannot be expected to effect the conversion of the great mass of men. The most that it can accomplish is to gather out the comparatively small number of the elect who are to serve as the special agents of the reappearing Christ. If the kingdom is ever to be brought to anything like a world-wide dominion, it will be through the coming and continued personal presence of the Redeemer. As to the

result of this extraordinary instrumentality some difference of opinion obtains. "Professional Adventists," as the churches may be called which issued from the Millerite movement, commonly, not to say universally, suppose the era of gracious opportunity to be closed at the second coming, and limit the blessings of the millennial age entirely to those who, at its beginning, can be classified as saints. A theory quite as rigorous had much currency among the Plymouth Brethren, at least in their early days.[1]

Other advocates of a pronounced Adventism entertain very largely the conviction that the personal advent of Christ will impart a mighty impetus to world evangelism and will result in greatly extending the area of salvation. But however wide a difference on this point may be in evidence, there is substantial agree-

[1] Neatby, A History of the Plymouth Brethren, pp. 227, 228.

ment in a pessimistic estimate of the efficacy of such forms of Christian enterprise as have been in use since Christ's ascension. Numerous citations might be offered in confirmation. "It is Christ's coming," says Seiss, "that is to make the millennium, and not the millennium which is to prepare the world for Christ's coming. . . . The Holy Scriptures, so far from promising to us a millennium of universal righteousness before Christ comes, universally represent the world as *abounding*, if not *ever growing*, in wickedness, even up to the very moment of his coming. . . . People think they see signs of promise in the movements of reform. They think to give the Church a better shape, and the State a better government, and the world a freer Bible, and that thus the millennium will come. I have no confidence in any such hopes. I see more of promise in the darkest features of the times than in all these pious and patriotic

dreams."[1] "Gigantic is the misconception," exclaims West, "to dream that God has given the Church, unable to reform herself, to build the Christian state up to a kingdom of Christ, or to reform the world. . . . More and more the Christian state is a tool of Satan."[2] "While rejecting," writes Peters, "the Whitbyan theory of a future conversion of the world *previous* to the second advent of Jesus as unscriptural and misleading, we at the same time firmly hold to a future blessed and glorious conversion of the Jews and Gentiles *after* the second advent, as plainly taught in the Word."[3] "They are without warrant in the Word," says Tyng, "who are looking for the conversion of the world by the preaching of the cross and the extending influence of the Church. In no portion of the Scripture is such

[1] The Last Times, pp. 40, 42, 299, 300.

[2] The Thousand Years in Both Testaments, pp. 448, 456.

[3] The Theocratic Kingdom of Our Lord Jesus, the Christ, III. 210.

a hope justified. All that the gospel was designed to accomplish was less than this."[1] "Nowhere," claims A. J. Gordon, "is universal redemption predicted as the result of preaching the gospel in this dispensation." First through Christ's personal coming in glory will the Jews be converted and a great ingathering of the Gentiles be effected.[2] The parable of the leaven is not opposed to this conclusion, for that symbolizes rather the spread of an apostate and corrupt Church than the transfusion of the world with a regenerate life.[3] Some of the "Pre-millennial Essays" presented at the Prophetic Conference of 1878 greatly qualify the idea that the preaching of the gospel was designed to convert the world.[4] In connection with the

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[1] He Will Come, p. 144.

[2] Ecce Venit. Behold He Cometh, pp. 47–57.

[3] Ibid., pp. 69–73. This interpretation is not convincing. Since it is the *kingdom of heaven* which is likened to leaven, the reference must be to the energetic and pervasive working of leaven, and not at all to its association with corruption.

[4] Essays iii and vii.

Millerite movement an editorial in The Signs of the Times, in 1842, characterized the notion of the world's conversion as "a false notion which blinds the minds of the Church and the world to the speedy coming of Christ"; and at the "Mutual Conference" at Albany in 1845 one of the representative statements affirmed that there is no promise of the world's conversion.[1] In a widely circulated book W. E. Blackstone states: "This wicked world, which is so radically opposed to God, and under the present control of his arch enemy, is not growing better. On the contrary, judgment, fire, and perdition are before it. Perilous times are coming. . . . There is no hope, then, for the world, but in the coming of Christ the king."[2] "Christ's kingdom," writes F. C. Ottman, "shall be established, not as men vainly imagine by the preaching of

[1] Wellcome, History of the Second Advent Message, pp. 251, 417, 418.

[2] Jesus is Coming, pp. 148, 149.

the gospel, but by the iron rod that shall smite down all opposition and make the enemies of Christ like the broken pieces of a potter's vessel."[1]

Quite as emphatic as any of the foregoing declarations are the oracular utterances of C. T. Russell. "God has not yet," he asserts, "by any means exhausted his power for the world's conversion. Nay, more: he has not yet even attempted the world's conversion. . . . The only hope is in the intervention of supernatural power, and just such a change is what God has promised in and through Christ's millennial kingdom."[2] At the Prophetic Conference held in Chicago in 1914, the distinction was more than once made between "converting the world" and "evangelizing the world," the latter phrase being made to denote the limited enterprise of publishing the gospel in all lands; "and

[1] The Unfolding of the Ages in the Revelation of John, pp. 65, 66.
[2] Studies in the Scriptures, I. 95, IV. 311.

that," said one of the speakers, "is something that can be done easily in a single generation."[1] The task of the Church, it was urged, is simply to evangelize the world, to publish the truths of the gospel, to the end of making up the number of the elect, and so hastening the second coming of Christ.

In some instances the pessimistic berating of the present dispensation, or that obtaining in the pre-millennial age, falls little short of being wholesale. Statements are met with which imply that the Lord's people are, in point of numbers, a perfectly insignificant factor in the world. Some of those attached to the Millerite movement began to denounce the Protestant communions, along with the Papal Church, and to include them all under the category of the wicked Babylon. Miller himself discountenanced this extreme, but it had a considerable run,[2]

[1] Page 76 in the Report of the Conference.

[2] Wellcome, History of the Second Advent Message, pp. 32, 33, 395, 396, 404.

and has been substantially reproduced in a very representative publication of the Seventh-Day Adventists.[1] The same sweeping judgment has come to voluble expression in the writings of C. T. Russell. According to his diagnosis, if Rome is the mother of harlots, the Protestant denominations are her daughters.[2] They too are included in the wicked Babylon.[3] While the dragon depicted in the Apocalypse symbolizes the Roman empire continued in the present civil powers, and the beast stands for the papal system of government, the false prophet or image of the beast denotes the Protestant Federation of Churches, and the Church of England is represented by the two-horned beast mentioned in Revelation xiii. 11.[4] In all denominations the great majority have neither part nor lot in the body of Christ.[5] God

[1] Bible Readings for the Home Circle, 1914, pp. 257, 258.
[2] Studies in the Scriptures, IV. 35, VI. 202.
[3] Ibid., III. 154, VI. 430.
[4] Ibid., Vol. IV, pp. iv–xvi.
[5] Ibid., VI. 446.

is not concerned about them. He leaves not merely the heathen world to itself in the present age, but so-called Christendom as well.[1] A writer whose expressed opinion of C. T. Russell is far from flattering approximates sufficiently to his point of view to remark, "To-day we witness the apostasy of Gentile Christendom."[2]

Not less pessimistic than the most radical of the cited opinions is the estimate which the early Mormon writers passed upon the entire record of the post-apostolic Church. Orson Pratt, Orson Spencer, and others recognized both in Catholicism and Protestantism only fit subjects for wrath. In more than one instance it was designated as the salutary and predestined office of the Latter Day Saints to dash to pieces all antecedent systems in Church and state,[3] thus

[1] Studies in the Scriptures, VI. 205.

[2] A. C. Gaebelein, Report of the Prophetic Conference of 1914, p. 197.

[3] Pratt, Series of Pamphlets, No. VI, p. 85; Orson Hyde, Journal of Discourses, VIII. 48–53.

fulfilling the function of the prophetic stone cut out of the mountains.

2. *Affirmation of an interregnum between the first and the second advent of Christ.* The standpoint of the whole series of writers referred to under the preceding topic involves a close approach to the idea of an interregnum for the given period. In proportion as the relative powerlessness of the means employed in the present dispensation is emphasized, the inference is enforced that the rule or kingdom of Christ is for the time being debarred from the world. Not all the writers in question positively assert this inference; but some of them make the assertion with greater or less distinctness. "The period of the Christian Church," says Peters, "is an intercalary one, extending through the 'times of the Gentiles.' . . . The kingdom being rejected by the Jews at the first advent, an intercalary period intervenes, and the 'times of the Gentiles'

are continued on to the second advent. . . . The design of this dispensation, or 'times of the Gentiles,' is not to establish the kingdom, but to prepare the way for the final restoration of that kingdom to the covenanted people."[1] Seiss records the opinion that "Satan, for the most part, is yet king and master of this world, and not the illustrious Son of David."[2] An identical conviction is expressed by Guinness.[3] A. J. Gordon utters an implicit warning against being seduced by recent victories of the gospel "into the notion that the kingdom has already come."[4] C. J. Scofield speaks of "the interregnum between the crucifixion and the second coming of Christ."[5] The kingdom, he affirms, is established first over restored and converted Israel. Uriah Smith, acting as spokesman for the Seventh-Day

[1] The Theocratic Kingdom of Our Lord Jesus, I. 158, 243, 587.
[2] The Last Times, p. 132.
[3] The Approaching End of the Age, p. 22.
[4] Ecce Venit, p. 94.
[5] Report of the Prophetic Conference of 1914, p. 43.

Adventists, rebukes the "bewildered commentators" who hold the theory "that the kingdom of God was set up at the first advent of Christ."[1]

3. *Belief that the Jews will be restored and invested with a certain pre-eminence in the millennial kingdom.* This belief was not shared by William Miller, and for the greater part has been eschewed by those in the line of succession from him. It was advocated, however, by some Millerites as early as 1842,[2] and one small body of Adventists—The Churches of God in Christ Jesus—still gives it hospitality.[3]

Outside the circle of professional Adventism those taking the point of view of pre-millennialism have often entertained the expectation of a restoration of the Jewish people and of their exaltation to a headship over

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[1] Thoughts Critical and Practical on the Book of Daniel, 1873, p. 57.

[2] Wellcome, History of the Second Advent Message, pp. 385, 386.

[3] Carroll, Religious Forces in the United States, p. 13.

the world. E. B. Elliott gives modest expression to this expectation.[1] Seiss puts it forth in this emphatic sentence: "The despised Jew shall yet look forth from Zion and behold the grave of every kingdom upon earth."[2] West includes among well-established conclusions the following: "That as a people Israel shall repossess their fatherland; that Israel, as such, shall stand with the Lamb upon the earthly Mount Zion, and dwell in the 'beloved city;' that not only in millennial days, but in the final state, Israel shall be the root and basis, the center and the crown, of the glorious kingdom of God."[3] According to Peters the Jews are to be reinstated in Palestine, not so much by colonization as by the display of supernatural power, and from this ancient seat they are to "sustain a certain well-defined pre-eminence among and over the na-

[1] Horae Apocalypticae, IV. 129.
[2] The Last Times, p. 169.
[3] The Thousand Years in Both Testaments, p. 244.

tions."[1] In the "Pre-millennial Essays" of the Prophetic Conference of 1878 the judgment is expressed that Israel is to be restored and given an exalted position.[2] The like judgment pervades the addresses given at the Conference of 1914. A. J. Gordon contends for the national restoration of Israel, and forecasts for her a distinct primacy in the kingdom. "Through her as a redeemed nation, and through her exalted city as capital of the world, the Son of David will now extend his blessed sway to the ends of the earth."[3] Identical conclusions are set forth in A. B. Simpson's summary of pre-millennial tenets.[4] "During the millennial age," says C. T. Russell, "Israel will be the chief nation of the earth, at the head of all on the earthly plane of being, into oneness and harmony with which all the obedient

[1] The Theocratic Kingdom, II. 92.
[2] Essays v and viii.
[3] Ecce Venit, pp. 294–296.
[4] The Gospel of the Kingdom, pp. 17–19.

will be gradually drawn."[1] Among German writers of a comparatively recent date Hofman, Auberlen, and Volck are on record as ready to accord to the Jews a certain pre-eminence in the millennial kingdom.[2] Account was made of the restoration of Israel by the Plymouth Brethren and the Irvingites. In the creed of the Mormons, as stated in one of their major authorities, this article is included: "We believe in the literal gathering of Israel, and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion will be built upon this continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth, and that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisaic glory."[3] More specifically Mormon faith locates the central seat of the coming kingdom in Jackson County, Missouri, where the New Jerusalem will be commenced. So states the

[1] Studies in the Scriptures, I. 241.
[2] Article "Chiliasmus" in Herzog's Real-encyclopädie.
[3] The Pearl of Great Price, p. 122.

catechism for children by Elder John Jaques.

4. *The assumption that extraordinary events, agreeable to a distinctly supernatural regime, will signalize the introduction and progress of the millennium.* That there will be a display of resistless might at the inauguration and during the continuance of the millennium is the common postulate of pronounced Adventism. The display is conceived to have, on the one hand, an aspect of marvelous beneficence and, on the other, of terrible retributive wrath. With the Adventist bodies, since they commonly terminate the season of grace at the second advent, as was noticed above, the saints are made the sole subjects of the beneficent intervention of divine power. For the rest of mankind the new age proffers nothing but destruction. Other representatives of pronounced Adventism are generally minded to take a broader view of the beneficent ministry which

obtains in the millennial period. Very glowing pictures find place in their writings. Thus Peters remarks: "The supernatural is held in abeyance as to its outward manifestation until the time arrives for the restoration of the forfeited blessing, the personal dwelling of God with man, which shall be experienced in this kingdom. When Jesus, of supernatural origin and glorified by supernatural power, shall come the second time unto salvation, his supernatural might shall be exerted in behalf of this kingdom in the most astonishing manner."[1] The curse will be taken off from physical nature, and men will be refreshed inwardly by a greater Pentecost.[2] A like point of view is embodied in these words of Seiss: "Men may scoff, and say that we are degrading the blessed Saviour to a level with earthly monarchs, and surrounding him with the miserable

[1] The Theocratic Kingdom, I. 81.
[2] Ibid., II. 143, 144, III. 64.

trappings of their foul courts. They may ridicule us, and say that we are dragging down the throne of heaven's King to place it amid graves, almshouses, hospitals, penitentiaries, labor-prisons, sickly cities, and worn-out states. But they forget that the promise is that Christ shall make all things new and banish forever all these evidences and emblems of depravity and sin. They forget that death is to be swallowed up of life, and the whole sentence of the world's curse rescinded."[1] "During the kingdom age," writes C. T. Scofield, "when Jesus Christ is reigning here, he will not suffer even the beasts to tear each other."[2]

The opposite picture, furnished by the unsparing exercise of sovereign retributive might, is also sketched with a bold hand. "God does not delight," writes Peters, "in employing

[1] The Last Times, p. 135.
[2] Report of the Prophetic Conference of 1914, p. 46.

violence, but force terrible and destructive must be used. . . . A theocracy embracing a pure infallibility, administered through righteous and glorified agents, is to possess the rule over the earth. Fallible imperialism, constitutional monarchy, and republicanism must be subverted and give place to this one. . . . All that oppose this coming kingdom and its august ruler shall be destroyed."[1] "That a period of awful and destructive judgments on apostate Christendom," says Guinness, "is to prepare the way for the full establishment of the millennial throne of Christ, and the world-wide recognition of his peaceful righteous sway, is abundantly clear, but the precise nature, duration, and effect of these judgments it is impossible to define."[2] "Instead of *calling* the world during the millennial age," declares C. T. Russell, "the Lord will command

[1] The Theocratic Kingdom, II. 775, 780.
[2] The Approaching End of the Age, pp. 487, 488.

them—command obedience to the principles of righteousness; and every creature will be *required* (not requested) to render obedience to the millennial government, otherwise he will receive stripes for his disobedience, and ultimately will be destroyed from amongst the people."[1]

Those who anticipate that the millennium will be a period of efficient evangelism find a support for their expectation in the binding of Satan for this period.[2] The Seventh-Day Adventists recognize the fact of the binding, but give it little else than a spectacular significance.[3] According to their scheme, there are no sinful men in conscious existence during the thousand years, and the saints throughout the same interval are sheltered in

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[1] Studies in the Scriptures, VI. 93.

[2] See, among others, West, The Thousand Years in Both Testaments, p. 286; Simpson, The Gospel of the Kingdom, p. 19; Guinness, Light for the Last Days, pp. 563–569; J. F. Silver, The Lord's Return, pp. 219, 257; R. McWatty Russell and B. W. Riley in Report of the Prophetic Conference of 1914, pp. 61, 108.

[3] Fundamental Principles of Seventh-Day Adventists, No. 27.

a heavenly sphere. This party of Adventists have been charged with canceling the doctrine of the millennial kingdom since, whatever recognition they may accord to a visible advent of Christ, they assign him no visible reign upon earth till after the expiration of the thousand years. It may be noticed also that among the Advent Christians a division of opinion exists as respects the fact of a future millennium.

In the customary thesis of ardent pre-millennialists the visibility both of the advent and of the reign of Christ in the millennial period are assumed. It suits, however, the convenience of C. T. Russell to deny both the one and the other. In this way he secures a species of shelter against exposure of the utter failure of his chronological calculations; at least he would have done so if his discretion had not failed him on a capital point.[1]

[1] See page 42.

As respects the subjects of the first resurrection, or that which takes place at the opening of the millennium, a large proportion of Adventist writers give a very broad interpretation to the words of the Revelator, and include with the martyrs all the righteous dead. For the most part they suppose the resurrection of the wicked to be deferred to the close of the millennium. Both points are stated very explicitly by A. B. Simpson as follows: "The Scriptures distinctly speak of two judgments—the judgment of the saints, which is a time of gracious recompense and reward for the services of his people, and the judgment of the wicked, which is entirely different—a dark and dreadful day when men shall be judged according to their works, and not on the principles of grace at all. They speak as distinctly of two resurrections, namely, the resurrection of the saints at Christ's coming, in which the wicked shall have

no part, and then the resurrection of all the remaining dead at the end of the millennium and on the morning of the judgment of the Great Day."[1] One of the minor bodies of Adventists—the Life and Advent Union—denies altogether the resurrection of the wicked.

5. *Stress upon the nearness of the second advent.* This feature in recent Adventism is too common to require confirmatory citations. All the writers in our list commend the attitude of earnest expectancy, and many of them are inclined to discover in the more notable events of the times signs that the Lord is about to return. Not infrequently enthusiastic anticipation has stimulated to attempts to fix the date. Cunninghame attached great importance to the year 1839, and while he did not undertake to locate

[1] The Gospel of the Kingdom, pp. 36, 37. Compare Cumming, Apocalyptic Sketches, pp. 445, 458; Guinness, The Approaching End of the Age, pp. 57–61; Gordon, Ecce Venit, p. 268; Munhall, The Lord's Return, pp. 95–103.

precisely the end of the dispensation, he felt assured that the commencement of the mighty catastrophe was "at the very door."[1] William Miller, as has been observed, selected first 1843 and then 1844 as certain to witness the great crisis.[2] E. B. Elliott, while not naming a specific year, concluded that the chronological data of the Bible warrant the inference that the end belongs in the neighborhood of 1866.[3] Cumming took a substantially identical position.[4] Seiss favored the supposition that the second advent would occur by 1870, and was confident that it would take place before the end of the nineteenth century.[5] A pamphlet issued in 1866 under the names of S. S. Brewer and A. Decker took the ground that the second advent would occur not later than 1867,

[1] The Scientific Chronology of the Year 1839.

[2] Course of Lectures.

[3] Horae Apocalypticae, Vol. IV.

[4] The End or the Proximate Signs of the Close of the Dispensation, pp. 72, 73.

[5] The Last Times, p. 269.

and one published anonymously in 1871 argued confidently for the coming of Christ in 1873. One writer has claimed—with what right we are not able to say—that more than a hundred expositions have put the crisis between 1866 and 1875.[1] Guinness expressed the conviction that the beginning of the millennial age could not well be placed later than about 1923.[2] C. T. Russell considered himself authorized to enlighten his fellow men by the publication of the following eschatological programme: The seventh thousand-year period began with the year 1873. In the following year Christ made his second advent, which took place invisibly. In 1878 the apostles and other overcomers belonging to the gospel age were raised and introduced to a share in the millennial reign in company with Christ. In 1914 the world powers are to be overthrown

[1] M. Baxter, The Great Crisis at the Period of 1867 to 1875.
[2] The Approaching End of the Age, pp. 472–487.

and the visible rule of Israel, now at length installed over the kingdom of God, is to be introduced.[1]

The Mormons have not been much given to calculating precise dates. Joseph Smith, however, is reputed to have been assured that if he lived to be eighty-five years of age he would see the face of the Son of man.[2] The Irvingites in the early period of their history cherished a very strong conviction of the imminence of the second coming. Among the dates favored by them were 1835, 1838, and especially 1866.[3] The Plymouth Brethren wholly escaped the temptation to specify exact dates, but in vivid expectancy they were not behind contemporary parties. "If anyone had told the first Brethren that three quarters of a century might elapse and the Church be still on earth,

[1] Studies in the Scriptures. For specifications on the 1914 crisis see III. 228, IV. 616, VI. 579.

[2] Doctrine and Covenants, cxxx. 14–17.

[3] E. Miller, History and Doctrines of Irvingism, II. 6–10.

the answer would probably have been a smile, partly of pity, partly of disapproval, wholly of incredulity.[1]

Naturally, the great European conflict, beginning in 1914, has powerfully stimulated Adventist fancy, and references to the gathering of the nations to the battle of Armageddon have been frequent.

[1] W. B. Neatby, A History of the Plymouth Brethren, p. 339.

CHAPTER II

SOME SPECIAL TEACHINGS OF ADVENTIST PARTIES

The reference here is to views which have gained a right of way in one or more of the Adventist communions and in the party for which C. T. Russell acts as spokesman. Representatives of Adventism in the larger communions have no sympathy with them. Perhaps, however, a partial exception should be made in case of the second in the list of special teachings.

1. *The unconsciousness or nonexistence of the dead.* With the exception of the Evangelical Adventists, the denominations which issued from the Millerite movement deny the immortality of the soul, maintain that the dead are in a state of complete unconsciousness, and, in so far as they

assume the resurrection of the wicked, assert that they are raised only to be annihilated after a brief interval. William Miller himself did not accept this order of belief, but it early gained a foothold among his followers, and before his death (1849) had come into the ascendant.[1] A daughter of Miller expressed the opinion that if her father had lived a year longer, he would undoubtedly have embraced the doctrine of the unconscious state of the dead.[2]

In the development and defense of the doctrine of the suspended or canceled existence of the dead, Adventist teaching manifested a tendency to adopt materialistic premises. A conspicuous example is afforded by Miles Grant. As between matter and spirit he gives a distinct primacy to matter, affirming that all power primarily proceeds from that which is material, and making spirit in itself destitute of life,

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[1] Wellcome, History of the Second Advent Message, pp. 508–518.
[2] J. V. Himes, A Brief History of William Miller, p. 300.

consciousness, and intelligence.[1] "All personalities," he says, "have bodily organs. All immaterial things are but properties of material bodies, and cease with them. The mind of man is not an entity, but the product of that wonderful organ called the brain."[2] This point of view he applies to God as well as to man, and brings out a representation of a localized Deity that strongly reminds of the Mormon conception.[3] It is fair to add that, while many of Grant's brethren among the Advent Christians accept his views, others criticize them as being too materialistic.

A theory in line with that of Grant as respects the interpretation of human personality is advocated by C. T. Russell. Death, he affirms, introduces to a period of absolute unconsciousness—more than that, it is a period of absolute nonexistence, except

[1] Positive Theology, pp. 50, 51.
[2] Ibid., p. 302.
[3] Ibid., pp. 317–326.

as men are preserved in the Father's purpose and power. Hence the awakening from death, to those restored, will mean a revival of consciousness from the exact moment and standpoint where consciousness was lost in death. "As applied to the dead, sleep is merely an accommodated term, for really the dead are dead, utterly destroyed."[1]

A recent statement puts the belief of Seventh-Day Adventists in these terms: "When the spirit goes back to God, the dust, from which man was made a 'living soul' in the beginning, goes back *as it was* to the earth, and the individual no longer exists as a living, conscious, thinking being, except as he exists in the mind, plan, and purpose of God, through Christ and the resurrection."[2]

2. *The doctrine of the little flock.* While representatives of Adventism

[1] Studies in the Scriptures, V. 329, 346.
[2] Bible Readings for the Home Circle, p. 507.

very commonly have emphasized the office of the present dispensation as being that of gathering out an elect people, a special flock of Christ—and some of them have put this point very strongly—none of them, so far as we have observed, has duplicated the description of the little flock, which is given by C. T. Russell. According to his characterization, the little flock is composed exclusively of those who have been drawn from the gospel dispensation. No Old Testament saint, whatever his spiritual rank, is admitted to a place in this select body. Furthermore, in point of destiny the members of the little flock are distinguished from all others who attain unto salvation; they share in the perfection of the divine nature, while the perfection of human nature is the highest goal for all the rest. "God's plan of salvation for the general race of Adam," it is claimed, "is to extend to each member of it, during the

millennium, the offer of *eternal life* upon the terms of the new covenant sealed for all with the precious blood of the Lamb. But there is no suggestion anywhere that immortality, the divine nature, will ever be offered or granted to any except the elect Church of the gospel age—the little flock, the bride, the Lamb's wife. For the others of Adam's race the offer will be 'restitution' to life and health and perfection of human nature—the same that Adam possessed as the earthly image of God before his fall from grace into sin and death."[1]

3. *Special theory on the cleansing of the sanctuary.* This theory has reference to the statement in Daniel viii. 14, that the sanctuary should be cleansed after twenty-three hundred evenings and mornings. Understanding this to mean twenty-three hundred days, and the days to be symbolical

[1] Studies in the Scriptures, V. 402. See also I. 181, II. 202, IV. 618, VI. 35, 94, 116.

of so many years, Millerite chronologers, reckoning from the decree of Artaxerxes for the rebuilding of Jerusalem, found a terminus for the period in 1843 or 1844, at which time Christ would come, and the sanctuary, that is, the earth or the land of Palestine, would be cleansed. As the result did not correspond with the prediction, it was concluded by some that, while the cleansing actually took place at the specified date, it was given a wrong connection by being applied to the earthly sanctuary instead of the heavenly. This revised interpretation was accepted as authentic by the Seventh-Day Adventists. In a current statement of their "Fundamental Principles" we read these propositions: "That the sanctuary of the new covenant is the tabernacle of God in heaven; that this is the sanctuary to be cleansed at the end of two thousand and three hundred days, what is termed its cleansing being, in this

case, as in the type, simply the entrance of the high priest into the most holy place, to finish the round of service connected therewith by making the atonement and removing from the sanctuary the sins which had been transferred to it by means of the ministration in the first apartment; and this work in the antitype, beginning in 1844, consists in actually blotting out the sins of believers, and occupies a brief, but indefinite space of time at the conclusion of which the work of mercy for the world will be finished, and the second advent of Christ will take place."[1]

4. *Affirmation of the perpetuity of the Sabbath law.* This peculiarity in the scheme of the Seventh-Day Adventists has in itself little connection with our theme. But in its treatment the writers of that communion have implicated it with the imagery of

[1] Nos. 9, 10. Compare J. N. Andrews, The Sanctuary and Twenty-three Hundred Days; Bible Readings for the Home Circle, 1914, pp. 232, 237, 243.

the book of Revelation, and have given it such a distinct eschatological association that a brief reference to it is justified. Thus J. N. Andrews attributes the putting of Sunday in place of the seventh day to the harlot Babylon, denounces the Christian world as wearing the mark of the beast and virtually worshiping the beast in its observance of the pagan festival of Sunday, and finds in the Seventh-Day people the object of the predicted persecution by the beast and its allies.[1] A similar strain is indulged in by Uriah Smith. He sees in the observance of the Lord's Sabbath that which "distinguishes the servants of God from those who worship the beast," and discovers in Protestant America the adverse power which is to make war upon those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus.[2] The views

[1] The Three Messages of Revelation xiv. 6–12.

[2] Thoughts on the Book of Revelation, 1865, pp. 127, 128, 207, 208.

expressed by Andrews and Smith are repeated in detail in a recent book.[1]

Were it admissible to point a moral in this connection, we should be tempted to remark upon the striking illustration, furnished by the matter of the foregoing paragraph, of how a secondary and dubious item of belief, when once turned into a sectarian postulate, can be so magnified in the imagination of its advocates as to govern the whole outlook and to hide the very sun in the heavens.

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[1] Bible Readings for the Home Circle, 1914, pp. 257, 272, 273, 277, 445, 449.

CHAPTER III

CARDINAL ASSUMPTIONS IN ADVENTIST ARGUMENTATION

1. *The need of an essentially literal construction of Old Testament prophecy.* Pronounced millennarians have asserted this demand, especially in relation to the fortunes of Israel. Many predictions bearing on this theme have, they claim, been literally fulfilled; and they infer that the remaining predictions await a fulfillment of the same order, and are not to be disposed of as accommodated, poetical, or symbolical picturings. Most of the Adventist bodies, though stanch advocates of literalism where it serves their creed, do not find, as has been noticed, a demand in prophecy for a great and special career of Israel in the future. But other representatives of modern

Adventism commonly recognize that demand, and emphasize in this relation the literal character of Old Testament forecasts. A specially strong putting of this point of view is given by West as follows: "A false spiritualizing, allegorizing, and idealizing interpretation has contributed to rob the predictions concerning Israel of their realistic value. . . . The Church does not understand the present age, nor its relation to the coming age, nor Israel's relation to both, and to the nations, and to the Church herself. And this blindness will continue until the false systems of interpretation, by which it has been caused, are rejected. Until the glamour of this enchantment has been dissolved, it is impossible to understand either the organic structure of prophecy, the mission of the Church, the position of our present age, Israel's place in history, the Antichrist, the ages and the ends, the difference between the kingdom and the Church,

or the time of Christ's appearing."[1] "A large portion of the Old Testament," writes Peters, "embracing entire chapters and continuous prophecies, has not yet been fulfilled, owing to the postponement of the kingdom and the designs of mercy, and hence the period of the Christian Church is an intercalary one extending through the times of the Gentiles; and if we desire to know its destiny, its ultimate condition in the consummation, the Old must be compared with the New."[2] The postponement of fulfillment, he goes on to urge, is in no sense an annulment. The literal significance of the prophecies is yet to be realized. Cumming contends that the vivid pictures of Israel's restoration contained in Isa. xi. 9, xvi. 1, 2, lx, Jer. xxxi. 28, 31–34, Ezek. xxxvii, Zech. viii. 21–23, xii–xiv, and Rom. xi obtained nothing like an adequate fulfillment in

[1] The Thousand Years in Both Testaments, Preface.
[2] The Theocratic Kingdom, I. 158.

the scanty recovery of the nation from the Babylonish captivity, and that consequently we must look to the future for the proper counterpart.[1] A. J. Gordon remarks: "A literal fulfillment of threatenings upon Israel argues a literal fulfillment of promises."[2] Like statements could be cited from A. B. Simpson and others.

2. *Reproduction by Christ and the apostles of the literal Old Testament conception of the kingdom.* Those pre-millennialists who subscribe to the preceding assumption naturally subscribe to this also. A very full and emphatic expression of it is furnished in the *magnum opus* of pre-millennialism, the massive work of Peters. Having asserted, as an undeniable fact, "that the Jews held to a personal coming of the Messiah, the *literal* restoration of the Davidic throne and kingdom, the personal reign of Messiah on Da-

[1] The End or the Proximate Signs of the Close of the Dispensation, pp. 142–158.

[2] Ecce Venit, p. 274.

vid's throne, the resultant exaltation of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation, and the fulfillment of the millennial descriptions in that reign,"[1] he subjoins these statements: "John the Baptist, Jesus, and the disciples employed the phrases, 'kingdom of heaven,' 'kingdom of God,' etc., in accord with the usage of the Jews. . . . Neither in the New Testament nor in any of the patristic writings do we find the least hint that the doctrine of the kingdom excited any controversy with the Jews, which it undoubtedly would have done if *antagonistic* to the Jewish view. This is strong corroborative evidence that the doctrine was in accordance with the Jewish Messianic expectations."[2] No sentences in the Gospels, our author claims, involve an opposite conclusion. Referring to the petition in the Lord's Prayer for the coming of the kingdom, he says: "Pre-millen-

[1] The Theocratic Kingdom, I. 183.
[2] Ibid., I. 195, 467.

narians are a unit in the application of this petition to a future Messianic kingdom at the *second advent.*"[1] As respects the words of Christ, "The kingdom of God is within you," he interprets them as meaning that the proper seat of the kingdom is within the limits of the covenant nation.[2]

3. *Continuance in the early post-apostolic Church of the literal view of the kingdom and of its destined installation at the second advent.* The teaching of the early Church up to the middle of the third century, according to the customary assumption in Adventist argumentation, was of identical tenor with that derived from the Old Testament prophets by Christ and the apostles. The literal view of the kingdom was thoroughly dominant. That this valid conception was subsequently crowded out was due, on the one hand, to the intrusion of

[1] The Theocratic Kingdom, I. 695.
[2] Ibid., II. 42.

Alexandrian or Originistic allegorizing and, on the other, to the bent of a worldly Church to exalt itself overmuch by overrating the significance of the present dispensation or the times of the Gentiles.[1]

4. *The identity of the fourth empire in the book of Daniel with the Roman, and the persistence of this empire in some form till the second advent.* While the first part of this assumption was by no means, prior to the closing decades of the nineteenth century, the exclusive property of the advocates of a pronounced Adventism, such advocates had a special motive to cling to it tenaciously, as well as to the second part of the assumption. The double premise provided them with the means of citing prophecy for a future introduction of the kingdom, and served as a convenient basis in making calculations as to the time of that

[1] Seiss, The Last Times, p. 248; Peters, The Theocratic Kingdom, I. 39, 244, 326, 499.

introduction; in other words, as to the time of the second advent. It is no cause for surprise, therefore, to find the champions of Adventism, whatever their differences on other points, substantially unanimous in holding both clauses of the specified assumption.

5. *The existence in the Bible, and especially in the books of Daniel and Revelation, of unequivocal means of determining, at least approximately, the time of the second advent.* The same vitality of interest in calculating the time of the Lord's return cannot be imputed to the entire list of writers cited in these pages as advocates of a pronounced Adventism. It is true nevertheless that most of them recognize in the Bible important data for measuring the existing dispensation and concur in the judgment that its end is in all probability near at hand. In enumerating the biblical data they find it very convenient, not to say essential to their eschatological scheme,

to make certain interpretations which have the common aim of giving a very far-reaching scope to prophetical forecasts.

One of the interpretations subserving this aim is that in which "days," as mentioned in prophetical writings, are construed to mean years. By this exegetical expedient events which otherwise would need to be placed near to the time of the biblical writer can be carried over to a recent or future age. Thus the twelve hundred and ninety days of Daniel xii. 11 can be understood to mean as many years. This year-day theory, as held by its exponents, applies in various connections where longer divisions than days are mentioned, since these divisions are resolved into days and these are then taken as symbolical of years. In this way the "seven times" of Leviticus xxvi. 18 yield twenty-five hundred and twenty years, a time being equal to a year and a year being reckoned

as containing three hundred and sixty days. By a like process the three and one half "times" of Daniel xii. 7 furnish a period of twelve hundred and sixty years, and the forty-two months of Revelation xiii. 5 one of the same length. A free employment of this plan of interpretation is universally characteristic of the writers representing professional Adventism, and has been sanctioned, either directly or indirectly, by not a few outside their ranks.[1]

A second special interpretation in the interest of chronological extension is that which construes the "seven kings" of Revelation xvii. 10 as successive forms of the government of Rome. Guinness gives the following list of the classes of rulers: kings, consuls, dictators, decemvirs, military tribunes, military emperors, and des-

[1] Elliott, Horae Apocalypticae, IV. 237; Guinness, The Approaching End of the Age, pp. 85, 222, 223, 346; Seiss, The Last Times, pp. 269-273; Gordon, Ecce Venit, pp. 203-206; Simpson, The Gospel of the Kingdom, pp. 113, 218-247.

potic emperors.[1] William Miller assigns the seventh place to "kings," understanding by them the rulers of the modern States of Europe.[2] Litch and Simpson bring the series down into the present age by putting the papacy, regarded as heir to the power of Rome, in the seventh place.[3] Uriah Smith prefers to identify the papacy with an eighth who is of the seven, as mentioned in Revelation xvii. 11.[4]

A third special interpretation adapted to the desire to extend prophetic forecasts across a very wide field consists in making the ten toes of the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, also the ten horns of Daniel vii. 7 and of Revelation xiii. 1, xvii. 3, 7, 12, to be symbolical of ten kingdoms, which are to be identified with divisions of the Roman empire and to be regarded as still subsisting on the European

[1] The Approaching End of the Age, p. 162.

[2] Lectures, p. 80.

[3] The Probability of the Second Coming of Christ about A. D. 1843; The Gospel of the Kingdom, p. 116.

[4] Thoughts on the Book of Revelation, pp. 269, 270.

continent. William Miller, using modern names, gave the list of the ten kingdoms as follows: France, Britain, Spain, Portugal, Naples, Tuscany, Austria, Lombardy, Rome, and Ravenna.[1] Seiss taught, "These ten kingdoms originally embraced the Huns, the Ostrogoths, the Visigoths, the Franks, the Sueves, the Burgundians, the Herulians and Thuringians, the Saxons and the Longobards. At present they perhaps embrace the three Papal States, Naples, Tuscany, Austria, Great Britain, France, Portugal, and Spain."[2] Miles Grant specified the original ten divisions as follows: Vandals, Gepidae, Saxons, Britons, Suevi, Ostrogoths, Allemanni, Burgundians, Visigoths and Franks.[3] Litch gave this enumeration: Huns, Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Franks, Vandals, Suevi, Burgundians, Heruli, Anglo-Saxons, and Lombards; and the like enumeration was repeated

[1] Lectures, p. 46.
[2] The Last Times, p. 173.
[3] Positive Theology, p. 359.

by Uriah Smith.[1] Cumming wrote out a list which differs in some particulars from any one of the preceding.[2] Various other writers, while confidently asserting the reference in prophecy to ten still surviving kingdoms, have preferred, with Peters,[3] not to attempt to name them.

A further special interpretation secures a long reach for prophetic intimations by applying certain symbols in Daniel and the Apocalypse to papal Rome and its predestined overthrow. Here belong the little horn of Daniel vii. 8, and Babylon, the mother of harlots, as described in Revelation xvii. So common has been the given application of these symbols that one would need to search narrowly to find exceptions among stanch exponents of the Adventist scheme. We notice, however, a writer who made Napoleon III a rival of the pope as respects the

[1] Thoughts on the Book of Daniel, p. 62.
[2] Apocalyptic Sketches, p. 281.
[3] The Theocratic Kingdom, II. 707.

role of Antichrist, and who testified that others entertained a like view of the French emperor.[1]

Still another special interpretation, which serves the purpose of connecting prophecy with the present and the impending age, might be mentioned. Out of the great storehouse of Daniel and the book of Revelation various writers derive intimations of the precise epoch, if not of the downfall of the Ottoman empire, at least of the decisive beginning of its fatal decline. Cumming placed this crisis at 1820, William Miller at 1839, and Guinness said it might be placed either at 1844 or 1919, according to the starting-point assumed in the reckoning.

In applying the biblical data deduced by the foregoing interpretations, Adventist chronologers have reached somewhat diverse results, inasmuch as they have not been agreed as to the proper starting points in the reckoning

[1] M. Baxter, The Great Crisis at the Period of 1867 to 1875.

—a matter which the biblical statements often leave quite indeterminate. This fact may be illustrated in relation to the longest of the periods of which note is taken, the twenty-five hundred and twenty years deduced from Leviticus xxvi. 18, and often characterized as the "Times of the Gentiles." William Miller reckoned from the captivity of Manasseh—located by him at B. C. 677—and so found the terminus in A. D. 1843. Guinness, taking the final conquest of Jehoiachin by Nebuchadnezzar in B. C. 598 as the latest possible date, concluded that the terminus on the basis of lunar years would be 1848, and on the basis of solar years 1923. C. T. Russell, placing Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Israel at B. C. 606 and reckoning from that date, concluded that the twenty-five hundred and twenty years would end in 1914. Baxter, assuming that the captivity under Manasseh is to be dated at B. C. 647,

placed the end of the Times of the Gentiles at 1873–75.

The element of dubiety in relation to starting points may also be illustrated in connection with the period assigned to the papacy. This period, according to a pretty wide agreement, is twelve hundred and sixty years, corresponding to the number of days in the "time, times, and half a time" of Daniel xii. 7 and in the "forty and two months" of Revelation xiii. 5. But from what point the reckoning should start has remained a matter of considerable uncertainty. Miller and his school of writers placed the beginning of the papal epoch at A. D. 538, making this the date of an edict of Justinian which was estimated to be very serviceable to the supremacy of the Roman bishop.[1] They accordingly located the end of the papal epoch at 1798 when Napoleon cast the

[1] They did not intend to deny that the edict was issued in 533, but found it convenient to fix upon 538 as the time when it became effective.

reigning pope into the dust and effected, if not the destruction of the papacy, a great abridgment of its prestige. Others, as Elliott and Cumming, putting the decree of Justinian several years earlier, locate the terminus of the twelve hundred and sixty years near the opening of the French Revolution. Guinness concludes that three possible dates for the beginning of the given period may be specified—the year 533, marked by the decree of Justinian; the year 606, when the Emperor Phocas took action favorable to the universal jurisdiction of the Roman bishop; and the year 663, when Pope Vitalian enjoined the services of the Church to be read in Latin throughout Christendom. The terminal dates corresponding to these several beginnings would be 1793, 1866–70, and 1923. Gordon writes that inasmuch as the papacy came in by stages, it may be expected to go out in the same fashion,

and specifies the years 1790, 1848, and 1868 as marking important steps toward the final overthrow.

It has been noticed that in the Millerite calculations Daniel viii. 14 was understood to name twenty-three hundred days, and these to be symbolical of years. A question may be raised as to whether the original specifies twenty-three hundred days, since it names "evenings and mornings," and the sum of the two may be regarded as expressed by the stated number. A double ground of dubiety, therefore, attaches to the construction put upon this verse, since both the starting point and the length of the period assumed in that construction can be challenged. A double ground of uncertainty attaches likewise to the Millerite conclusion based on the twelve hundred and ninety days of Daniel xii. 11. Perhaps it would be better to say that the conclusion rests upon an uncertainty as to the starting

point contemplated by the biblical writer and upon a plain mistaking of the event to which he refers, since there are good reasons for identifying that event with the interruption of the Jewish temple service rather than with the abolition of paganism in the Roman empire.[1]

The intelligent reader, we surmise, will gain the impression, in advance of any formal criticism, that the chronological construction of recent Adventism rests upon very uncertain foundations. We hope, before the conclusion of the next chapter, to afford matter adapted to strengthen that impression.

[1] Thus the doing away with the *continual* (Dan. viii. 13, 14) has often been interpreted in Adventist circles. It is to be observed, however, that a recent interpretation makes the *continual* to refer to Christ's mediation in heaven as being thrust aside in the intention of the Roman apostasy (Bible Readings for the Home Circle, 1914, pp. 227–229).

CHAPTER IV

CRITICISM OF THE CARDINAL ASSUMPTIONS

1. Considering these assumptions in the order in which they have been given, we notice, in the first place, the literal character claimed for the Old Testament forecasts of the kingdom and of Israel's destined eminence in the kingdom. This is no well-established postulate; and a careful review of the conditions does not permit that it should be rated as even probable. The Old Testament prophets, as sharing in the common limitations of men, were compelled, to a large extent, to make use of local colors in picturing the unfoldments of the kingdom of God in the world. They could not deny their environment in this matter any more than we can deny our environment when we

attempt to picture the immortal life. The city with its walls and gates, the trees and fountains, the harpers harping with their harps, the marriage supper of the Lamb—what are these but symbols taken from our visible surroundings wherewith we attempt to picture that which lies beyond the range of clear knowledge? New Testament writers filled with the prophetic spirit could not do better than to employ such symbols. Plainly, then, it would be unwarrantable to expect the Hebrew prophets to escape accommodation to their surroundings in their pictures of the fortunes in store for the kingdom of God upon earth. In those surroundings were potent factors —such as the records of the national history, national aspirations, convictions and hopes wrought into the religious fiber of the earnest and the devout—which combined to place Israel before the minds of the prophets as occupying a central place in the

kingdom. To ask them to paint that kingdom in its full universality and its transcendence of national limitations would be asking them to deny the horizon within which they stood, and to place themselves within one of a vastly different order. They wrote as they were under practical compulsion to write, and as might be expected of them, even were it in the divine plan that the Jewish dispensation should survive the installation of the Christian dispensation only in and through the great religious contribution which it should make to Christianity. In the higher point of view, to survive in this endlessly fruitful and inestimable contribution can easily appear as more honorable and glorious than to be appointed heir to any sort of temporal position and distinction. A petty nation exercising earthly jurisdiction in Palestine is a far less enkindling subject to contemplate than Israel made immortal in its spiritual

work and going forward in the power of an universal religion to make conquest of the world.

Again a ground for qualifying the literal character of many of the descriptions penned by the Hebrew prophets lies in the fact that these descriptions are in the form of impassioned poetry. Many of them no more need to be construed as matter-of-fact statements than does the declaration in the Psalms that the righteous man is safeguarded by angelic hands from dashing his foot against a stone. Furthermore, we are warned against taking the path of strict literalism by the plainly intended application of some of the most glowing of the prophetical forecasts to the fortunes of Israel in a future no further ahead than the restoration from the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. Observe how elements in the environment of their epoch enter into the fervid strains of Isaiah (chapters xi, xxv, xxx, xlv,

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lii), and of Jeremiah (chapter xxxii). If the prophets could employ such language in describing the resurrection of the nation from the desolations wrought by Assyrian and Babylonian power, what demand is there for taking their high-wrought figures as portraying destinies not to be fulfilled till thousands of years after the first coming of the Messiah? Possibly in one or another of these chapters premonition vaguely transcends the era with which the prophet is more directly concerned; but in any case his glowing imagery is applied in large part to the era of Israel's recovery from the Assyrian and Babylonian woes, and presumes upon the existence in the neighborhood of Israel of political factors which have long since vanished. Undeniable illustration is therefore given of the wide swing of prophetic idealism; and we see that millennarians make gratuitous demands when they contend that a far-reaching

and substantially literal fulfillment of the ideal pictures of the prophets is still to be witnessed. A more reliable plan of interpretation is that which respects the point of view expressed in these words of the eminent Old Testament scholar, A. B. Davidson: "Prophecy is what the prophet in his age and circumstances and dispensation meant; fulfillment is the form in which his great religious conceptions will gain validity in other ages, in different circumstances, and under another dispensation. Certain elements, therefore, of the relative, the circumstantial, and the dispensational, must be stripped away and not expected to go into fulfillment."[1]

The contention that the threatenings against Israel were literally fulfilled, and that accordingly a literal fulfillment of promises, or a fulfillment going very far beyond that effected

[1] Article Prophecy and Prophets in Hastings's Dictionary of the Bible.

in the recovery from the Babylonish captivity, is to be expected, finds an answer in these considerations: Complete fulfillment of promises is to be regarded as dependent upon complete national response to ethical and religious conditions. Furthermore, the literal fulfillment that went on record is by no means to be rated as scanty. When Israel had been trodden down and dispersed by the Assyrians and Babylonians, according to all earthly analogy the day of absolute and irremediable doom had come. That she was reinstated and enabled to become the theater of the most marvelous chapter in human history, was in virtue of an astonishing national resurrection. The illuminated minds of the prophets, foreseeing a people as good as dead and buried thus coming forth and entering into the great ways of Jehovah, naturally felt justified, and were justified, in sketching the anticipated deliverance in fervid speech. Much

of what they wrote can be seen, if we put aside a false numerical standard, to have its counterpart in the marvelous historical outcome. Add now due allowance for the poetical strain in prophetical delineations, and the reason put forward for demanding a further and more distinctive fulfillment may be regarded as substantially overcome.

In writing upon this topic we realize that the verdict of modern critical scholarship is not likely to make much impression upon the majority of those devoted to an emphatic Adventist creed. Higher criticism is very commonly mentioned by them in terms of wholesale denunciation. This may be controversially convenient, but it is not judicial. Extreme views may have been advocated by one and another critic; but careful and thoroughly sustained inductions have also been furnished in the sphere of modern critical investigation of the Old Tes-

tament. When Adventist apologists dismiss or ignore these, on no better ground than an indiscriminate denunciation of the critics, they would do well to inquire seriously whether their motive is the desire to guard the Bible from injustice, and not rather the importunate wish to shield their own special interpretations of the Bible from disquieting attack.

2. The next cardinal assumption, or that which affirms the reproduction by Christ and the apostles of the literal conception of the kingdom, as normally extracted from the Old Testament, is subject to challenge on account of its radical one-sidedness. It is true that a literal notion of the kingdom of God as an earthly dominion, in which the Jewish nation should have the primacy, was quite firmly intrenched in the minds of the Jews at the coming of Christ. It is true also that there are some indications that this

notion had gained such a lodgment in the minds of the primitive disciples that it was difficult to dislodge it, or to force it into the background, all at once. But, on the other hand, it is to be observed, that a contrasted view came within the circle of New Testament thought, a view accordant with the placing of the major emphasis on the spiritual nature of the kingdom. An ample basis for this improved conception was supplied in the discourses of Christ. The Master, it may be granted, gave a place to a certain outward aspect of the kingdom, in presenting it betimes as something future and destined to be brought to manifestation by a glorious display of divine power. But he provided nevertheless an offset to Jewish narrowness and externalism on the theme of the kingdom, and that in a twofold way. On the one hand he lifted the notion of the kingdom above the Jewish plane in substantially dis-

carding the national connections by which it was bound in contemporary thought. He contrasted the new order of things which he came to establish with the ancient Old Testament order (Matt. ix. 17). He declared that many shall come from the east and the west and occupy a place in the kingdom which Israelites shall be found unworthy to occupy (Matt. viii. 11, 12), and that as a people they shall be dispossessed of the Lord's vineyard and see it let out to other husbandmen (Matt. xxi. 33–45). In harmony with this recession of the national point of view he gave injunction for the preaching of the gospel, not simply within Jewish boundaries, but to all nations (Matt. xxviii. 19). On the other hand, in numerous instances he spiritualized the notion of the kingdom by using words which obviously imply that it is a present and interior reality. Such an implication lies in the words which Christ addressed to

the Pharisees: "The publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." "Ye shut the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye enter not in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering in to enter" (Matt. xxi. 31, xxiii. 13). The same view is embraced in Christ's approving response to the scribe, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark xii. 34). The kingdom is also described as here and now in the words with which Christ replied to Pharisaic calumny. "If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, then is the kingdom of God come unto you" (Matt. xii. 28). The same may be said of the whole list of parables in which the kingdom is likened to the sprouting and growth of grain, to the development of a mustard seed, to the working of leaven, to the finding of a treasure hid in the field, and to the obtaining at large cost of the goodly pearl. Further, the collocation of petitions in the Lord's

Prayer contains a plain suggestion that the coming of the kingdom is identical with the doing of God's will on earth as it is done in heaven. Very clearly the present subsistence and the spiritual character of the kingdom are declared in this sentence: "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation, neither shall men say, Lo, here, or there! for lo, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke xvii. 20, 21).[1] In short, it is quite evident that advocates of pronounced Adventism have, in numerous instances, constructed a much too narrow mold for Christ's teaching. The import of that teaching is not to be judged by reference to a few phrases which he may have used in accommodation to contemporary modes of speech. Intrinsically so comprehensive

[1] The possible, but less eligible reading, "The kingdom of God is in the midst of you," does not contradict the spiritual character of the kingdom, for if present, and still hidden from observers, it must be in the invisible order. G. N. H. Peters's interpretation, as noticed in a previous connection, is incongruous with the whole gist of the passage.

a theme as that of the kingdom is adapted to give rise to a variety of representations. Viewed as to its source and central principle the kingdom is the realized moral rule of God; viewed as to the relations of its subjects, it is an ideal society. Regarded as a sum of spiritual goods which accompany or result from the realized rule of God, the kingdom can be spoken of as a treasure to be received; regarded as the domain where a divine and heavenly regime obtains, it can be described as a province or sphere to be entered. As already inaugurated and in process of development, the kingdom is here and now; as awaiting a great consummating stage, it is yet to come. All these aspects are represented explicitly or implicitly in the teachings of Christ.[1]

In respect of the apostles, as indicated above, it can hardly be affirmed

[1] Compare the author's New Testament Theology, pp. 73–79.

that in the first stage they came up to the broad spiritual view of the Master. The statement at the opening of the book of Acts rather implies that they did not. But as they went forward, and especially as they discovered that the Gentile world was the great field of promise for the gospel, the Jewish restrictions attached to their thought of the kingdom fell away. Nowhere in the epistles is there a note of the idea that the kingdom is a specially Jewish affair.[1] Paul, on the contrary, declared the middle wall of partition to have been broken down, and repudiated distinctions between Jew and Greek as foreign to the gospel dispensation (Eph. ii. 13, 14; Rom. ii. 28; Gal. iii. 28, 29). He expressed, indeed, a generous hope as to the ultimate conversion of his kinsmen (Rom. xi), but forecast for them no sort of temporal or spir-

[1] Compare Samuel Waldegrave, **New Testament Millennarianism**, p. 109.

itual primacy. Furthermore, he demonstrated that Christ's view of the kingdom, as being in a prominent aspect a present and interior reality, claimed recognition in his thought, for he described it as "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xvi. 17). So apostolic thinking went on to transcend the Jewish standpoint which has been so largely reproduced in modern Adventism. The idea of a future advent remained, indeed, in the mind of the apostles; but the general idea of an advent is one thing; the notion of a visible, and especially of a Judaic, kingdom on earth is quite another thing.

3. The assumption relative to the prevalence, in the first patristic age, of the millennarian creed, or the doctrine of the imminence of the visible kingdom of Christ, has an appreciable element of truth. But two qualifying considerations are entitled to notice.

The first of these applies to the alleged fact. While it is true that a considerable proportion of the early fathers were rather pronounced millennarians, it is not true that the whole body can be so classed. Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Tertullian, Commodianus, and Lactantius undoubtedly taught the genuine creed of millennarianism. But that creed is not found in the writings of Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp, Tatian, Athenagoras and Theophilus. Neither is it found in the pretty full collection of the writings of Cyprian or in that of Clement of Alexandria. It was resolutely opposed by Origen, Dionysius, and others of the Alexandrian school from the middle of the third century onward. We conclude, therefore, that the broad statement about the prevalence in the first Christian age of the notion of the visible earthly reign of Christ, which modern millennarians are accustomed to cite from

Gieseler, needs to be cut down appreciably. The second of the qualifying considerations applies to the exegetical competency of the first advocates of millennarianism. Their modern successors tell us that the Alexandrians who took up the role of opposition were given to an ultra-idealistic interpretation. But cannot literalism be as extravagant as idealism? Are the crude representations in which Papias and Irenæus indulged respecting the fruitfulness to be exhibited by the earth in the millennial age to be preferred to Alexandrian allegorizing? Was Tertullian an exegete to be specially trusted?—the man who in his crass literalism supposed that regenerating efficacy was made an inseparable attachment of the baptismal water, so as necessarily to work the new birth in the candidate whom it might touch. In truth, may we not say that some of these early fathers were too nearly akin to the Jews

who were so imprisoned in the letter that they could not do justice to the spiritual character of Christ's kingdom? Origen and Augustine may have been faulty interpreters, but no good reason is apparent why Papias, Tertullian, and others of the early millennarians should be rated at a higher figure as exegetes.

4. There are good reasons for challenging both parts of the fourth assumption. The traditional view that the fourth kingdom depicted in the book of Daniel is to be identified with the Roman has to a very large extent been relinquished by recent scholarship. Among learned commentaries of a recent date that of H. H. Wright supports it; but it is resolutely rejected in those of Bevan, Behrmann, Driver, Prince, Farrar, and Charles, as also in Porter's Messages of the Apocalyptic Writers. It is the conviction of these scholars that the book of Daniel means,

in its representation of four successive kingdoms (chapters ii and vii), to interpose the Median Kingdom between the Babylonian and the Persian, and so to assign the fourth place to the Greek kingdom or empire of Alexander and his successors, which, they claim, impressed Orientals as being peculiarly characterized by crushing force. They note that, while the Medes can scarcely be reckoned as possessing a world-empire, they came to prominence in advance of the Persians, being the chief instrument in the destruction of Nineveh in B. C. 607. It is admitted by them that in some passages of the book of Daniel the Medes and the Persians are spoken of as united into one power (v. 28, vi. 8, 12, 15); but this is explained, they assert, by the fact that in this book the Medes are viewed at two different stages. At the first stage they are regarded as constituting the second in the succession of empires,

while at the second stage they are regarded as being under the leadership of the Persians and consolidated with them. That they really are assigned a place in the list of empires is quite distinctly evidenced. The statement that the second kingdom was to be inferior to the first, or Babylonian (Dan. ii. 39), is far better suited to the Median than to the Persian dominion. More decisive still, we have the fact that Darius *the Mede* is mentioned as taking the kingdom, and is located immediately after a Babylonian ruler and before Cyrus, who is formally characterized as a *Persian*. As further supporting the theory of the interposition of a Median empire reference can be made to the tenor of the book. Most unmistakably it shows a dominating interest in the Greek empire, awarding to it by far the larger space. The conviction is scarcely to be avoided that for the apocalyptic writer this was the em-

pire fraught with the most fateful consequences to Israel. To all appearance he was conscious of no occasion to forecast historical details beyond its limits. The book has thus a unity and consistency, on the supposition that the second empire was the Median and the fourth the Greek, which cannot be secured on the competing supposition that the Roman empire was designed to occupy the fourth place. A hint that for the author the Roman power stood off on the horizon of the theater which he was surveying, instead of playing a principal part on that theater, is contained in the reference to "the ships of Chittim" (xi. 30). "This must be an allusion to the Roman fleet which was sent to Egypt under Caius Popilius Laena, in order to force Antiochus to evacuate the country."[1] The description of iron strength as characteristic of the fourth kingdom is doubtless suitable to Rome;

[1] Prince, A Critical Commentary on the Book of Daniel, p. 182.

but it is also a true reflex of the impression made upon the Oriental world by the amazing conquests of Alexander, while the representation that the iron was mixed with clay is peculiarly appropriate to the weakness which speedily befell Alexander's empire by reason of division. On the whole, the evidence for identifying the fourth empire in Daniel with the Greek is fairly decisive.

The second part of the assumption under consideration, namely, the persistence of the Roman empire under the form of ten kingdoms or states, falls away of course with the disposal of the first part, so far as any prophetic forecast in the book of Daniel is concerned. And even if the first part were left standing, the basis for the second part would be utterly equivocal. The book of Daniel, under the symbol of ten horns (vii. 7, 24), speaks of ten kings, not of ten kingdoms, and it savors of exegetical rash-

ness to transmute the one into the other. The context advises against such an expedient. An individual king, Antiochus Epiphanes—the "little horn" of Chapters vii and viii and the wicked prince of Chapters ix–xi—follows after the ten kings, and it is not to be supposed that the writer used the term "king" in different senses in closely connected clauses.

The book of Daniel, then, affords no basis for postulating ten kingdoms, successive to the Roman empire, and capable, by any stretch of the imagination, of being identified with states in modern Europe. How is it with the book of Revelation? Adventist chronologers no doubt have a much better opportunity to discover here a foundation for their favorite theory respecting ten surviving kingdoms. There is no need to foist into the text a reference to the Roman empire. In its colossal might it stands at the front. As the writer of the book of

Daniel had a most vivid impression of the Greek empire, especially in relation to the Maccabean crisis, so the author of the book of Revelation was penetrated through and through with a sense of imperial Rome as a ruthless persecuting power, the remorseless assailant of the Christian Church. Using imagery analogous to that of Daniel he describes this power as a monster with seven heads and ten horns (xvii. 3, 12). It is from these ten horns that Adventist chronologers are minded to get their ten kingdoms successive to the Roman empire. But the undertaking is bound to be abortive. The Revelator says nothing about ten distinct long-existing kingdoms. What he mentions is ten kings acting as allies of one or more of the seven kings symbolized by the seven heads of the beast. His words are, "The ten horns that thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but they receive

authority as kings, with the beast, for one hour. These have one mind, and they give their power and authority unto the beast" (xvii. 12, 13). This is plainly not a picture of kingdoms successive to Rome, but of kings contemporary with one or another of the Roman emperors, probably with *Nero redivivus*, characterized as an eighth who is of the seven. Just who they were is not clearly determined. They may have been Scythian satraps, and they may have been governors of Roman provinces. They cannot denote rulers in modern Europe, for these are no contemporaries of Roman emperors. Modern rulers cannot even be counted successors of the emperors in any strict sense. The Roman empire was never parceled out into ten kingdoms. The simple facts are that barbarian tribes came into one of its main divisions and used some of its materials for building up their several states—facts of an order with

which no descriptions in the book of Revelation correspond.

5. It was noticed in connection with the assumption of the existence in the Bible of unequivocal means of determining, at least approximately, the time of the second advent, that Adventist chronologers were under constraint to resort to several special interpretations. The first of these, which makes the day of prophetical discourse to equal a year, has a very slender foundation in the Bible. Numbers xiv. 34 and Ezekiel iv. 4–6 are cited in its behalf. But in the first of these passages no symbolical import is attached to the "days," the statement being that the rebellious Israelites should be punished as many years as it took days to spy out the land of Canaan; and in the second passage it is formally stated that the days employed by the prophet in passing through a certain role should be

typical of years of national experience. In neither passage is there a hint that it was a habit of biblical writers to use days, without note or explanation, as symbolical of years. This Adventist principle of interpretation is therefore destitute of all positive biblical warrant. Furthermore, the various instances of its application can be characterized as gratuitous and arbitrary. Take the "seven times" of Leviticus xxvi. 18; why should it be imagined that this phrase incorporates a reference to a period of twenty-five hundred and twenty years? That it was meant to denote any specific interval of time is not at all probable. To say that the Israelites should be punished "seven times" was equivalent to saying that they should be punished with unsparing severity, or up to the full limit of their deserts. When it is said in the book of Proverbs (xxiv. 16) that "the righteous man falls seven times," it is not meant

that he keeps up the process for twenty-five hundred and twenty years; neither does the text in Matthew's Gospel (xviii. 21, 22), which directs to forgive seventy times seven rather than seven, prescribe one hundred and seventy-six thousand and four hundred years as the period through which one's forgiveness of his brother should run. As a perfect number, *seven* signified to the Hebrews completeness, and was often used for emphasis apart from definite chronological significance, as in the reference to silver being purified seven times (Psa. xii. 6). There is no reason to suppose that it was used otherwise in the given passage in Leviticus.

As respects the periods of days in the book of Daniel, the elimination of the supposition that the fourth empire was the Roman cancels the occasion and the possibility of construing them as periods of years. They find ready interpretation as spec-

ifying brief intervals viewed as antecedent to, or connected with, the deadly assault of Antiochus Epiphanes against the Jewish nation and religion.

This conclusion respecting chronological usage in Daniel gives support to the supposition of a like usage in the book of Revelation, as being a writing which found in no small degree its stylistic model in the earlier apocalypse. Furthermore, recent scholarship is as disinclined to read long periods into the Christian as into the Hebrew book.

In one connection, doubtless, the book of Daniel uses a chronological term in the extended sense. The seventy weeks of ix. 24–27, by the common verdict of commentators, denote seventy weeks of years, or four hundred and ninety years. By the extension of the seventy years specified by Jeremiah as the period of the Babylonish captivity, the writer was able to accommodate the prophecy of his predecessor to a later ordeal in

the history of the Jewish people, an ordeal bearing as fearful an aspect as the carrying away to Babylon. In thus applying the forecast of Jeremiah he was using a liberty, often illustrated in later Judaism, of finding a secondary meaning in the biblical text. It would appear also that he followed a current Jewish chronology which, as is seen in the writings of Josephus and Demetrius, made the interval between the fall of Jerusalem (B. C. 586) and the reign of Antiochus considerably too long. But it is not necessary for our purpose to pass upon these points. It is enough to observe that the use in Daniel of the term "week" in the larger sense, in a single case, where the motive for the special use is quite intelligible, affords no substantial ground for magnifying his periods of days into periods of years.[1]

[1] As illustrating the possible singularity of Adventist chronology, we notice the theory that sixty-nine of the seventy weeks of Daniel cover the history of Israel down to the crucifixion of Christ, and from that point Israel's history is suspended, so that

The second special interpretation which we noticed identifies the seven kings of Revelation xvii. 10 with seven successive forms of Roman government. The advocates of this interpretation have a difficult task to defend it from the charge of being farfetched and groundless. Some of the forms enumerated by them could hardly have stood out with any distinctness in the field of vision of either the writer or the contemplated readers of the Apocalypse. Simcox makes a sober statement when he writes: "Considering that the dictatorship, the decemvirate, and even the tribunate were transitory episodes in the Roman government—the first avowedly exceptional and ephemeral, the second both exceptional and ephemeral, and all three as well as the primitive monarchy probably unknown

the seventieth week will not begin till the period of the Jewish restoration at the second advent. The theory appears in The Unfolding of the Ages in the Revelation of John by F. C. Ottman, and indications of it are also contained in the Report of the Prophetic Conference of 1914.

to Saint John's original readers—this view does not appear even plausible."[1] No one in truth but a grubbing antiquarian could ever have felt the least incentive to refer to seven forms of Roman government under the name of seven kings. What the phrase refers to is seven emperors, the count probably beginning with Augustus Cæsar.

The gratuitous nature of the third special interpretation has already been exhibited in the remarks on the symbolic import of the ten horns of Daniel vii. 7, 24 and Revelation xvii. 3, 12.[2] An implicit criticism has also been passed on the next special interpretation. The absence of any attempt in Daniel to depict the Roman empire, as also of any reliable sign that the periods of days which are mentioned were meant to be construed as periods of years, cancels all positive ground for imputing to the book any

[1] The Revelation of St. John the Divine, pp. 104, 105.
[2] Pages 96–100.

reference to papal Rome. To discover a subject for the character and deeds assigned to the "little horn" there is no need to look beyond the typical enemy of Israel, Antiochus Epiphanes. As regards the Apocalypse the grounds for excluding a reference to papal Rome are not perhaps quite so decisive; but they are not insufficient. Judicial scholarship finds in the beast of Chapter xvii imperial pagan Rome, and in the Babylon of the same chapter the city of Rome. In the second beast of Chapter xiii there is very likely a reference to a power in the spiritual or ecclesiastical order; but the power denoted is the pagan priesthood viewed especially as fostering the current emperor-worship. The practical homage rendered by the second beast to the first affords decisive evidence that the reference cannot be to papal Rome. The popes never were imbued with any noticeable ambition to make all the world to worship secular rulers.

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In so far as papal Rome has acted the part of an autocratic, ungodly, and persecuting power, some of the symbolic representations in the Apocalypse may be suited to her record, but their primitive application belongs to a field much nearer to the Revelator's experience and observation. They cannot with sobriety be utilized for framing a chronological succession reaching into the modern era. The like remark applies obviously to Paul's reference in Second Thessalonians to the "man of sin." This phrase probably refers to an outburst of wickedness having its source in spiritual society; but the apostle may have thought of that order of society as being represented by a fanatical and desperately wrought-up Judaism rather than by an apostate form of Christianity. In any case, his description affords no basis of time measures.

If the eyesight which discovers papal Rome in Daniel and the Apocalypse

overpasses the range of prophetic intimations, quite as emphatically does the vision run to excess which finds in these writings references to Mohammedanism and the signs of its doom. The alleged references—claimed to exist in the Apocalypse in one or another of the pictorial narratives respecting seals, trumpets, or bowls (Chapters vi, viii, ix, xi, xvi)—are too vague to elicit any faith in one who is not already more than willing to believe. Adventist discourse on this theme is such a play of the imagination as might be expended with equal effect upon almost any collection of symbolic representations.

With all its other grounds of insecurity Adventist chronological construction is undermined by the conjectural elements in its starting points. A preceding page has given illustration of this conspicuous weakness. It is really a cause for amazement that anyone should repose confidence in

time measures so utterly destitute of authenticated starting points as are many of those with which Adventist chronologers have been occupied. Take the period of twelve hundred and sixty years which they have concluded to be the period allotted to the papacy. We are told that the beginning of the period may be placed at the date of Justinian's decree (A. D. 533), or at the time of the decree of Phocas (606), or, as one writer informs us, at the year when Pope Vitalian prescribed the use of the Latin language in the services of the Church (663). Evidently, close reckoning is impossible where the starting point is as indeterminate as it is made by these differing dates. But the case for Adventist chronology is much worse than it appears in this statement. To place the origin of the papacy at any one of the given dates is arbitrary well-nigh to the point of absurdity. The decree of Justinian marked no im-

portant era in the history of the papacy. In its terms it is descriptive rather of a *patriarchal* than a *monarchical* type of a church government, and simply awards an honorary primacy to the Roman bishop as the episcopal head of Old Rome, to whom the bishop of Constantinople stands in close conjunction as episcopal head of New Rome. Practically, too, Justinian rendered a very doubtful service to the Roman bishop. While, through victories over the Goths in Italy, he relieved that ecclesiastic of some local embarrassments, he prepared for him more serious difficulties in the degree to which he brought him under imperial domination. "With the conquest of Italy," writes Schaff, "the popes fell into a perilous and unworthy dependence on the emperor at Constantinople, who reverenced, indeed, the Roman chair, but not less that of Constantinople, and in reality sought to use both as tools of his state-church

despotism."[1] No more is it in evidence that any substantial service was rendered to the pope by the usurper Phocas. He gave, to be sure, a flattering title which Boniface III was greedy enough to accept; but the title amounted to little else than a form of words. There is the scantiest occasion to refer to the decree of either of these emperors, to the exclusion of that of Valentinian III issued nearly a century before the time of Justinian in behalf of Leo the Great. No one of the three fulfilled any noteworthy office in founding the papacy, or marked any significant era in its growth. The order of Pope Vitalian respecting the use of the Latin language may have had an appreciable significance, but no reputable church historian would care to refer to it as fixing the date of the origin of the papacy.[2]

[1] History of the Christian Church, revised edition, III. 326. Compare Milman, History of Latin Christianity, I. 461.

[2] We do not find eminent church historians—Neander, Schaff,

Further illustration of the elements of insecurity in Adventist chronology is scarcely necessary. We wish to pass judgment with sobriety. We respect and even admire the earnest piety of some of those who have entered into these chronological ventures. But in all candor we can but pronounce the ventures manifest failures. Adventist chronological construction, in view of its imposition of a thoroughly doubtful sense upon chronological terms in the Bible, its rash and gratuitous application of apocalyptic symbols and its arbitrary assumption of starting points, is unreliable, fanciful, and groundless.

Moeller, and others—so much as mentioning either the decree of Justinian or the order of Pope Vitalian. The tenor of Justinian's decree we have judged by the text given by Litch (The Probability of the Second Coming of Christ about A. D. 1843, p. 88).

CHAPTER V

CRITICISM OF SPECIAL TEACHINGS OF ADVENTIST PARTIES

1. Recurring to the list of these teachings, as given in a previous chapter, we begin with the assumption characteristic of the great majority of Adventist communions respecting the unconsciousness or nonexistence of the dead in the interval between death and the resurrection. Whatever verbal support may be claimed for this assumption in the Bible, it is distinctly in conflict with the conclusion which a balanced and comprehensive exegesis must derive from the total biblical data. Even if it could justly be imputed to certain portions of the Old Testament, it could not forthwith be assigned a place in the biblical revelation, since eschatology is a quite

secondary theme in the Old Testament, and it is perfectly conceivable that on various points authoritative instruction, as opposed to an incidental appropriation of contemporary modes of thinking, may have been reserved to the New Testament revelation. It is in that revelation that immortality is distinctly brought to light. As compared with the Hebrew oracles it speaks with superior authority on the future condition of men.

It is not necessary, however, to press this consideration. The Old Testament, if less clear and positive than the New in this relation, is to be credited with the conviction that men remain conscious subjects after death. A probable evidence in favor of its incorporation of this conviction may be found in the fact that the Semitic kindred of the Israelites in Babylon indulged in descriptions of the place and state of the dead very nearly parallel to those contained in

the Old Testament, and at the same time made evident their intention not to deny the continued existence of the dead, but rather to emphasize the woful poverty and emptiness of the subterranean life to which they have descended. So many are the points of correspondence between the Sheol of the Israelites and the Aralu of the Babylonians that it would take very distinct data to overcome the presumption that they were both alike regarded as abodes of men endowed with a species of consciousness, though condemned to an inferior shadelike existence.

Another probable evidence is met in the characteristic belief of later Judaism. This undoubtedly included the conscious existence of the dead. To whatever point Sadducean negations may have run, the great body of the Jewish people in New Testament times were fully persuaded that the dead live on in spite of bodily

dissolution.[1] The parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke xvi. 19–31) clearly assumes this persuasion in the minds of those addressed, for it could not be expected that they would be influenced by an appeal to conditions acknowledged to be purely fictitious. It is demonstrated, then, that the Jews were not held by the Old Testament books to a belief in the unconsciousness or nonexistence of the dead. As a body they came definitely to entertain an opposite belief. One can indeed accuse them of being faulty interpreters; but there is a certain presumption on the side of the conclusion that their oracles did not exclude the ultimate and dominant belief.

A third probable evidence, so weighty as well-nigh to pass over from the sphere of probability into that of decisive proof, lies in the consensus of recent biblical scholarship. This is

[1] See Schürer, Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi, 1886, Vol. II. pp. 460, 461; Bousset, Die Religion des Judentums im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter, pp. 281ff.

unequivocally on the side of the proposition that Old Testament thought, like that of all ancient peoples, acknowledges the continued existence of the dead, though in a state contrasted with the virile activity of the present life, and capable of being described in rhetorical phrase as a sinking into forgetfulness and inaction. So decide the authors of standard textbooks on the biblical theology of the Old Testament, like Oehler, Riehm, Dillmann, Schultz, and Piepenbring. Indeed, we fail to discover a single recent writer of acknowledged prominence in the field of Old Testament theology who takes a different ground. A like statement is admissible respecting eminent expositors of biblical eschatology in our time, such as R. H. Charles, S. D. F. Salmond, and L. Atzberger.

In the line of direct evidence two conspicuous facts of the Old Testament may be cited. In the first place the practice of necromancy, or the

habit of invoking the dead, prevalent in Israel from an early to a late period, indicates that belief in the survival of the dead was deeply imbedded in the minds of the Hebrews, and carries the implication that when they spoke of death as destruction they were using a strong figure to describe precipitation into the comparatively empty existence of Sheol. The second significant fact is the description of the death of distinguished persons as a being gathered to their people or their fathers—a description applied "in cases like those of Abraham, Jacob Aaron, Moses, and others,[1] where the temporary or permanent resting place was far removed from the ancestral graves."[2] The usage shows that for Hebrew thought Sheol was not identical with the grave, but was regarded as providing for a certain community of existence after death. Doubtless it

[1] Gen. xv. 15, xxv. 8, 17, xlix. 33; Num. xx. 24, 28, xxxi, 2; Deut. xxxii. 50, xxxiv. 5.

[2] Salmond, The Christian Doctrine of Immortality, p. 199.

was felt that Sheol bore a close analogy to the grave, being pictured as an underground receptacle for the dead. This explains how in a number of passages it seems not to offend against the sense to translate Sheol as the "grave." That the two were confounded in the Hebrew mind is far from being indicated by their capacity to fulfill, within limits, a common function in imaginative discourse.

If the strong phrases in which the Old Testament describes the disappearance of men from the obtrusive realities of the present embodied life are found not to negate their continued existence, still less do any kindred phrases in the New Testament serve to negate such existence. The offset here is abundant and decisive. Jesus vetoed the postulate of professional Adventism, that the destruction of the body is the destruction of the individual, by the antithesis which he drew between ability to destroy

the body and ability to destroy the soul (Matt. x. 28; Luke xii. 4, 5). Again in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus he gave a distinct picture of a conscious life after death, and while some features in the picture may have involved accommodation to current belief, it savors of violence to construe his underlying assumption of continued conscious existence as mere accommodation, since the lesson enforced by the parable is vitally dependent upon that assumption. Once more his gracious promise to the dying thief is accordant with the natural sense of the given parable, as implying that death may involve an immediate transference from a distressful to a blessed estate. The Adventist exegete will evade this meaning by joining "to-day" with "I say," rather than with the clause, "Thou shalt be with me in paradise." But this interpretation imputes a comparatively pithless use of words to Christ, and is credible

only to him who wishes to give it his credence.

In the Pauline writings belief in continued conscious existence crops out distinctly at various points. The apostle as good as affirms his belief that such existence is not tied to the body. In dealing with the Corinthian offender he makes a formal contrast between the destruction of the body and the saving of the spirit. He expresses a longing to be clothed upon with his house from heaven, lest he should be found naked, thereby distinctly admitting the possibility of passing into the condition of a disembodied spirit. He says in relation to an ecstatic experience that he could not tell whether during its continuance he was in the body or out of the body—a form of words that can mean nothing less than the possibility of an extra-bodily existence. In addressing his Philippian brethren he sets forth as alternatives "abiding in the flesh" and

"departing and being with Christ," and declares that he finds it difficult to make choice between them. In short, the unstudied and incidental statements of Paul make as forceful a testimony to belief in the possible existence of the soul apart from the body as would the most formal and explicit declaration.

Other portions of the New Testament witness to the same belief. It is attested by the prayer of the dying Stephen to the Lord Jesus to receive his spirit; by the Petrine passage on the preaching of Christ to the spirits in prison, these spirits being identified as disembodied men who had transgressed in the days of Noah (1 Peter iii. 18–20, iv. 6); and by the crying of the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God (Rev. vi. 9, 10). Passages like the above disclose unmistakably the standpoint of the biblical writers, and the exegesis which attempts to explain them away

is too obviously overtaxed to gain any wide currency in scholarly circles. Apologists for the dogma of the unconsciousness or nonexistence of the dead have the misfortune to be refuted by the Bible in both of its main divisions.

2. The next special theory which invites our criticism—namely the doctrine of the little flock—has received, as was observed, a peculiar version from the hand of C. T. Russell. He holds not only that the object of the Christian dispensation is to gather out from the mass of men a select company, but that the members of this company alone of all the race are lifted above the plane of human perfection and made partakers of the divine nature. They are as distinctly a privileged set as were the "pneumatics" of the old Gnostic speculation. In fact, the theory of Russell makes as arbitrary divisions of men as were

ever depicted by Gnostic fancy. It represents God as fundamentally conditioning the possibilities of human destiny on the accident of birth within a given temporal interval, and as limiting to a selected few an inheritance which there is no natural ground for denying to any of the saved. It is difficult to see how a God who adopts such a plan of administration can be respected even by the man who feels certain that he himself is numbered among the favored few. By its very terms it shadows divine benevolence and debases divine sovereignty to the ranks of arbitrary rulership.

The doctrine of the little flock, even apart from Russell's peculiar supplement, calls for very scanty appreciation. To represent the whole aim of the Christian dispensation to be the calling out of a predetermined number is to set the Author of that dispensation in a very unenviable light, as also to render very poor justice to the uni-

versality of the grace proclaimed in the gospel. Election is doubtless a great truth; but election is to special responsibilities and ministries, to the end that the area of salvation may be extended as widely as possible. Men are called to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth, not to felicitate themselves on belonging to an exclusive circle of God's favorites.

3. The curious doctrine of the cleansing of the sanctuary, which was mentioned as a phase of teaching current among the Seventh-Day Adventists, had no better basis than a desire to preserve credit to a chronological speculation, namely, that which found in Daniel viii. 14 evidence that a great crisis, preparatory to the advent, would occur in 1844. Since the precarious and improbable elements which enter into the given speculation have been exposed,[1] an effective criticism of the

[1] See Chapter iv, topic 5.

doctrine dependent upon it has already been given. We make room, however, for a couple of comments. In the first place, we remark on the strangeness of the fancy that Daniel in his age should have been led to measure off the time which would elapse before an event, belonging entirely in the invisible order and utterly incapable of verification by any natural means, should occur. Let anyone, who can, believe that prophetical inspiration functioned in such an eccentric fashion. The second comment respects the ultra and mechanical ceremonialism involved in the theory of a formal cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary at a special point in the nineteenth century. The only intelligible cleansing which can be figured for that sanctuary is the putting away of obstacles to cordial fellowship between the pardoned sinner and the God whom he has offended, and that occurred when Christ, bearing the tokens of his accomplished sacrifice for

sin, ascended into heaven. His presence in the nature in which he suffered afforded the needful basis for drawing near to God with boldness; in other words, the needful cleansing of the upper sanctuary.

4. The last of the special tenets claiming our attention is also the property of the Seventh-Day Adventists, being the one which has given them their name by its assertion of the perpetual obligation of Christians to keep sacred the seventh day of the week. Were this tenet in anywise representative of primitive or apostolic Christianity, we should expect to find traces of it in the early postapostolic Church. But no such traces are found. Doubtless there were Christians of Jewish lineage who kept the Jewish Sabbath in addition to paying special respect to the first day of the week—the day honored as commemorative of the resurrection of

Christ. But in the Gentile world, where the constituency of Christianity greatly outnumbered its Jewish contingent before the close of the apostolic age, recognition of an obligation to keep the Jewish day is far from being in evidence. On the contrary, such obligation was formally disowned, and the first day of the week was marked for special commemoration, as we learn from the writings of the fathers distributed through the whole extent of the second century. Ignatius of Antioch, in that version of his epistles accepted as genuine by the foremost scholars, plainly indicates his conviction that to keep the Jewish Sabbath is to live according to Judaism rather than according to Christ, and is contrary to the Christian calling.[1] The Epistle of Barnabas speaks of the eighth day, that is, the first day of the week, as significant of the beginning of another world, and adds: "Wherefore also we

[1] Epist. ad Magnes., chapters viii, ix.

keep the eighth day with joyfulness, the day also on which Jesus rose from the dead."[1] In the so-called Teaching of the Twelve Apostles Christians are enjoined to come together, and break bread, and give thanks on the "Lord's day" (xiv. 1)—a phrase which, as the usage of Ignatius indicates, could have designated no other than the first day of the week.[2] Justin Martyr testifies: "On the day called Sunday all who live in the cities or in the country gather together to one place."[3] Respecting the observance of the Sabbath, he remarks that, as it was not in force before Moses, so it is no longer needed after the coming of Christ.[4] Irenæus classes the Jewish Sabbath with circumcision as being rather symbolical of truth that applies under the Christian dispensation than as remaining in its

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[1] Chapter xv.

[2] See Lightfoot, The Apostolic Fathers, ii. 128; Schaff, The Teaching of the twelve Apostles, p. 208.

[3] 1 Apol., lxvii.

[4] Dial. cum Tryph., xxiii.

literal character.[1] Tertullian speaks of Jewish Sabbaths, new moons, and festivals as strange to Christians, and puts in their place the Lord's Day and Pentecost.[2] The Sabbath precept of Moses he distinctly characterizes as temporary.[3]

Such a line of testimonies leaves no room for reasonable doubt as to the position of the early postapostolic Church. It shows that those who followed the apostles as leaders and teachers knew nothing of any authoritative injunction to keep the Jewish Sabbath, and, furthermore, were fully convinced that the first day of the week was to be set apart as preeminently the sacred day for Christians. This fact amounts to a strong presumptive evidence that no apostolic precept in behalf of the observance of the seventh day, beyond what is recorded in the New Testament, was ever issued. Reference can indeed be

[1] Cont. Haer., iv. 16.
[2] De Idol., chapter xiv.
[3] Adv. Judaeos, chapter iv.

made to a custom still largely prevalent in the East in the fifth century to hold religious assemblies on Saturday as well as on Sunday. So the historians Socrates and Sozomen report,[1] and this custom they place in contrast with that of Rome and Alexandria. It is to be noticed, however, that neither of these historians refers to any felt obligation to treat Saturday as a Sabbatic or rest day, and that the first named declared it incompatible with the Christian faith and contrary to apostolic injunction to practice Jewish rites. Furthermore, the custom to which they refer as obtaining in the East stands in such contrast with the explicit testimonies cited from the second century that the fair conclusion is that it reveals a relatively late, rather than a primitive point of view, the tradition governing the practice of Rome and Alexandria being the more ancient.

[1] Socrates, Hist. Eccl., v. 22; Sozomen, Hist. Eccl., vii. 19.

As for the New Testament, who by searching can find any apostolic precept for seventh-day observance? Mention, it is true, is made in several instances of Paul's election of a Sabbath day as the time for preaching in Jewish synagogues. But how else could he find a Jewish audience and carry out his purpose to first offer the gospel message to his own kindred? His practice herein contains no hint that he commended Sabbath observance to the Gentiles or made it the law of any church which he ever founded. On the contrary, there are indications that the first day of the week was made the day of assemblies for his congregations (Acts xx. 7; 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2). Furthermore, in giving this instruction to the Colossians, "Let no man judge you in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a Sabbath day" (ii. 16), he explicitly excluded the imposition of the Jewish Sabbath law upon Christians as a matter of

obligation. That the other apostles were agreed with Paul, at least as respects the freedom of Gentile Christians from that law, may be argued from the action of the apostolic council at Jerusalem. In its specification of things from which Gentile Christians might be advised to abstain out of respect for Jewish points of view, the council made no reference to conduct conflicting with the Jewish idea of the Sabbath.

We see, then, that the bearing of the New Testament on the question before us is conspicuously accordant with the standpoint of the postapostolic Church. In their agreement the two sources of evidence powerfully confirm the conclusion that the Gentile world, with full apostolic consent, was exempted from the Jewish Sabbath law. The attempt of the Seventh-Day Adventists to reinstate the Old Testament law must be rated as a lapse into Judaizing, which in some other

relations they have been more successful in avoiding than many of the modern advocates of a pronounced Adventist creed.

The historic proof may properly end the discussion. Should anyone, however, be inclined to improve upon apostolic Christianity, and to urge that the fourth commandment, as being part of a moral code, is perpetually binding, we shall be prompt to answer by a denial of his premise. The fourth commandment may be auxiliary to moral ends, but it is not a moral law proper, since it is not an unequivocal dictate of man's relations to God or to his fellows. It is simply a salutary disciplinary provision for man at a particular stage of his development. No one knows that it applies literally to the saints in heaven. No one knows that the keeping of each recurring seventh day is the imperative demand for the physical or religious well-being of every man. So widely do men differ

in constitution that one man might find one tenth of time devoted to rest and worship as adequate for his needs as one fifth would be for another person. The selection of one seventh may best meet the average needs of men; but averages are a matter of expediency and not of morality. The content of the fourth commandment—which is, of course, a hundred times more decisive than mere location—plainly excludes it from the category of a proper moral law. Sufficient credit is given to it when it is accounted, in its relation to the Christian dispensation, simply as a great historical precedent providentially designed to supply the general model of the Christian week, and to teach impressively the need of a recurring day of rest and worship.

To disparage the observance of the first day of the week on the score of the character of Constantine, who issued the first Sunday law of the

empire, or on account of a clause which he diplomatically inserted for the purpose of conciliating the heathen majority under his scepter, is just about as judicial as to contemn the Protestant Reformation by reference to the character of Henry VIII or to some point in his legislation. On the same plane is the berating of Sunday observance as involving obeisance to Rome and the papacy. What had Rome to do with Paul's instruction to the Colossians or with the point of view represented by such writers as Ignatius and Justin Martyr? As well put the mark of the beast on the doctrines of incarnation and atonement, because these held a place in the faith of the Latin Church, as to put it upon Sunday observance because forsooth that Church gave its sanction to such observance.

CHAPTER VI

A LIST OF OBJECTIONS TO RECENT ADVENTISM

THE treatment awarded to the cardinal assumptions of Adventism gave occasion for a rather full statement of several leading objections, such as those holding against its narrow interpretation of the "kingdom," and its artificial manipulation of time measures. In the present chapter we take note of some further objections, which apply to teachings that have had wide currency, being represented more largely outside of professional Adventism than inside that domain.

1. Among these objections the lack of perspective shown in dealing with the subject of the millennium may be emphasized with entire justice. The biblical basis for affirming so much as the idea of the thousand-years reign

is exceedingly scanty. Only the book most prodigal of poetical symbolism in the whole canon of Scripture broaches the idea, and this one book contains only a single brief passage that carries any suggestions of a millennium (Rev. xx). The claim, indeed, is not infrequently made that Paul in First Corinthians xv. 23, 24 provides for an interval between the resurrection of those who are Christ's and the resurrection of the rest of mankind, since, after referring to the former, he adds: "Then cometh the end." But to make the word "end" refer here to a completing stage of the resurrection is quite gratuitous. The fact that Paul nowhere else in his epistles refers to the resurrection of the wicked lends countenance to the supposition that he intends no such reference here. Moreover, it is distinctly more natural to make "the end" refer to the closing up of the age or dispensation than to make it stand for a final stage of

resurrection.[1] It is not to be overlooked also that, even if the latter sense be given to the expression, there is no certification that the traditional conception of the millennium was in Paul's mind, since he says nothing about a special reign, or extraordinary era, or, indeed, any measurable period at all being interposed between the resurrection of those who are Christ's and the end. We are thus directed to a few verses in the book of Revelation as the one passage which, with any degree of explicitness, gives expression to the notion of the millennium. Doubtless, as has been contended, an authoritative disclosure of some phase of the divine plan might be left to a single passage in the sacred volume. But does it savor of doctrinal proportion to take the conception contained in the single passage, bring it to the front, and make its validity vital to

[1] Compare Kennedy, St. Paul's Conception of the Last Things, pp. 322–324; Findlay in the Expositor's Greek Testament; Beet, Commentary on St. Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians.

faith in the possible success of the Christian dispensation? It is one thing to admit that a specially distinguished era is to antedate the great consummation. It is another thing, in face of the silence of substantially the whole line of biblical writers, to magnify the importance of that era and to concentrate hope upon it as including in itself the means which alone can bring Christianity to a real triumph in the world. In proceeding to this extreme apologists of Adventism exceed the warrant of the one millennial passage in the Bible. They assume that all the righteous dead are subjects of the first resurrection. The given passage makes no certain reference to any but a company of martyrs. They assume that the binding of Satan implies the signal triumph of gospel agencies.[1] The given passage does not certify that it involves anything more than

[1] Exceptions to this and the following assumption have been duly noticed in previous connections.

abstinence from persecuting violence on the part of the nations. They assume that the reign of Christ is to be a visible earthly reign. The given passage contains no explicit word about the location of the reign or about the means by which it is made effective.[1] In short, typical advocates of Adventism in recent times rear a superstructure much too broad for the biblical basis. They fail of perspective in dealing with the contents of Scripture.

2. Another objection to recent Adventism is the poor respect which it pays to the universalism of Christianity or its transcendence of national distinctions. The New Testament, as has already been shown,[2] rises above national distinctions, and establishes an ideal incongruous with the conservation of any temporal or religious preeminence to Israel. Its teaching

[1] Compare Geisinger, Heart Problems and World Issues. A Study in the Book of Revelation, pp. 178–180.

[2] Chapter iv, topic 3.

implies that as the law was a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ, so Israel fulfilled its divine calling as a forerunner to the all-embracing system or dispensation inaugurated in Christ. Who can read such a description of the centrality of Christ to the spiritual universe as is contained in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians, and then think of his reign as conditioned upon, or specially allied with, a perpetuated Jewish nationalism? The New Testament ascends to an outlook wherein the metes and bounds of Jewish nationality seem thoroughly out of place. Rationally, too, to put the stamp of a perpetual preference upon a single nation is hard to justify. Even the temporary position of Israel as an elect nation involved serious hazards. There was a danger that, after having fulfilled the office of a forerunner of Christ, it should become lacking in humility, and refuse to accept that true maxim of

a forerunner so nobly uttered by John the Baptist in the words, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John iii. 30). History shows that the danger was far from being evaded. A Christ, not thoroughly subordinated to its own distinction and preeminence. Israel would not deign to own. It came to entertain such a stubborn conviction that it had a special lien on the divine favor that it was no longer pliable to the divine will. If this result could not be avoided in connection with a temporary national distinction, what is to be said of the natural effect of a scheme which sets Israel above the nations in the final disposition of earthly forces? What is to guarantee that the stamp of aristocratic superiority will not effect a sense of self-importance perilous to the religious character of those to whom it has been affixed on the ground of nationality? Plainly, something approaching to omnipotence would be needed to

counteract the inherent tendencies of the scheme, and to prevent its working toward the religious undoing of Israel. Rather, we should say omnipotence might well be baffled in the attempt to overcome the force of the artificial conditions.

The rational objection to a perpetual exaltation of a single nation reenforces the interpretation which, on other grounds, has been given to the Old Testament prophecies respecting Israel's future.[1] We have an added ground for declining to construe those prophecies literally; and that means a ground for declining to find in them forecasts of a millennium proper.

3. A further objection may properly be urged against recent Adventism on the score of the virtue which, in its doctrine of the millennium, it assigns to physical instrumentalities. The preaching of the gospel, it is alleged,

[1] Chapter iv, topic 1.

cannot be expected to convert the world. Only with the reappearance of the Lord, and the inauguration of his visible reign, will evangelism succeed on any great scale. This point of view, we contend, puts a premium on physical instrumentalities, and is out of harmony with the New Testament estimate of spiritual agencies. History has not shown that mere physical might and display are potent to effect spiritual transformations. Christ taught his disciples to expect that the efficient working of the Holy Spirit in and through them would far more than compensate for his physical absence. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus he expressly asserted that those who believe not Moses and the prophets would not be convinced though one should rise from the dead. In the apostolic teaching not a little is said about the efficacy of the gospel message and about the sanctifying power of truth. But vivid as was the

expectation, in the primitive Christian community, of the reappearance of Christ, no apostolic word associates that reappearance with a prospect of world evangelism. We conclude, then, that the faith which so many zealous millennarians have reposed in the religious efficacy of the visible advent is very poorly founded.

4. Once more it can be objected to recent Adventism that a tendency to abridge missionary incentive lies in its characteristic points of view. This is not equivalent to saying that up to date the champions of a pronounced Adventism have exhibited a special lack of missionary zeal. An appreciable number of them have been men of admirable religious earnestness, so that their books are able to minister edification to one who thoroughly dissents from their ruling conceptions. What we maintain is that, *in the long run*, a scheme of doctrine which dis-

parages the efficacy of the ordinary means of evangelism, or places the main emphasis on a hastening of the coming of Christ by a fugitive proclamation of the gospel to the nations, has a tendency to weaken missionary incentive. In a community thoroughly leavened with a faith in the power of gospel agencies to work successfully for the redemption of mankind, those tendencies may be held in check for a considerable period. Nevertheless, they are logically inwrought with the given system, and in the absence of powerful offsetting influences would be quite certain to come to manifestation sooner or later.

5. Finally, recent Adventism is in some degree exposed to the objection that it harbors an over-technical biblicism, to a relative neglect of historical and scientific considerations. History doubtless has no authoritative message to offer on the nearness or the re-

moteness of the second advent. But it does illustrate very strikingly how all attempts to fix the time of that event have utterly miscarried, and thoroughly justifies the induction that an attitude of calm waiting rather than one of anxious expectation becomes the Christian. If it be said that the example of the apostles makes for a different conclusion, it is to be replied that the apostles took lessons from the historical evolution on other themes, and in all probability on this theme also, and we should be put to shame by them if we could not derive from the prolonged tuition of the centuries wholesome suggestions regarding the proper attitude toward the prospective advent of the Lord. As respects natural science, obviously it has no distinct pronunciamento on the nearness or the remoteness of the end of the dispensation. What it does testify is that, so far as natural causation is concerned, there is no

substantial reason apparent why the earth should not abide and afford adequate sustenance to the human race for long ages to come. This is not saying very much, but to the extent that science is able to validate the conviction that a law of economy is operative in world-management it affords a ground for surmising that the present type of human existence will not speedily reach its goal. On the ability of science to substantiate the given conviction we do not care to pronounce. For us the main emphasis falls upon the lessons of history. These veto, as a piece of egregious folly, the attempt to fix the time of the advent. Consequently, they advise against making any anxious account of its imminence. Mental sobriety allows no other attitude toward an event that lies in an indeterminate future, and may be distant by the breadth of long ages. From the viewpoint of eternity the long ages may indeed

appear as only a narrow interval; but for beings with our time consciousness it is psychologically impossible to reduce them to insignificance in our customary outlook upon the earthly drama.

Following the suggestions of the supplementary sources of evidence, not a few in our time are disposed to interpret the doctrine of Christ's coming as properly denoting only the progressive triumph of his spirit in the world. He comes, they affirm, in every notable advance of the type of truth and life represented in him toward ascendency over the minds of men and the institutions of society. This interpretation, we cordially admit, includes one great aspect of the truth of Christ's advent; but we are far from being persuaded that it contains the whole truth. In the New Testament revelation the advent stands as the great initial event in introducing a most extraordinary and ideal con-

summation, even the completion of the judicial process running through history, and the instatement of a redeemed humanity in an incorruptible inheritance. Its import lies in its relation to this marvelous consummation, to which it serves in the pictorial representations of the Bible as the preface. The *coming Christ* means the one who is to open the door to the transcendent and eternal dispensation. Anything circumstantial in his coming is of very slight consequence, and it is no part of religious discretion to award it any higher character than that of admissible figure. Christian contemplation should be directed toward what he comes to inaugurate. That is great, glorious, overwhelming, something to which the best phases of the present temporal order make only a distant approach. It places a light upon the horizon out of whose living glow the faithful toilers in the earthly vineyard should derive perpetual cheer and inspiration.

CONCLUSION

Our task is historical and critical rather than constructive. Its execution nevertheless has suggested a number of inferences on the theme of the second advent, and a few words may appropriately be added by way of summarizing these.

1. Attempts to determine the time of the second coming have no longer any credible basis. History has clearly demonstrated their utter futility, thereby affixing its sanction to the old-time declaration, "Of that day and hour knoweth no one" (Matt. xxiv. 36).

2. There is no good warrant for associating the second coming with a visible earthly reign of Christ. Old Testament prophecy can be made to support the idea of such a reign only by imputing to it a literalism which there are sufficient exegetical grounds

for challenging. As for the New Testament, it affords not a single text which is clearly in favor of a visible earthly reign. Some commentators, it is true, conceive that in the thought of the Revelator (xx. 4–7) this earth was to be the theater of the millennial rule of Christ and of the martyrs who were to be granted a part in the first resurrection. But other commentators favor an opposite conclusion. The words of the Revelator are quite indecisive. They have no efficacy to authenticate the notion of an earthly reign in face of the fact that the general body of relevant texts in the New Testament contemplates the second coming as the immediate antecedent of the final judgment, and not one of these texts represents the returning Christ as setting foot upon the earth.

3. As there is no suitable warrant for the assumption of a visible earthly reign, so there is no adequate ground

for making great account of the visibility of the second advent. Were the disciples of Christ confined to a single limited province, it might be of some concern to them to be able to anticipate that the coming of their Master will be in the field of the natural vision. But, since they are scattered over the globe, there seems to be no possibility that he could be disclosed to the natural eyesight of more than a paltry fraction of them, in any direct approach to the earthly theater. This is not asserting that it is necessary to dispute the visibility of the advent, but only that it is not prudent to place upon it any appreciable emphasis. In the scriptural references the stress may be regarded as falling not so much on the precise form of the future manifestation as on the certainty that the Christ who had disappeared would reappear in a way that would enforce recognition. This is the important point, and in view of the unimagined

scope of divine resources it shows poor discretion to attempt to inclose the subject in a narrow literalism.

4. A kindred remark applies to the idea of the millennium. While not rejecting that idea, we may be advised not to put too large a meaning into the single expression of it contained in the Bible. It is to be remembered that the Revelator looked out upon a world in which a gigantic power held sway, a power which gave mortal offense to his inherited Jewish belief by setting itself up as an object of worship, and to his Christian faith and zeal by threatening destruction to the flock of Christ. He could but regard this power—which plainly was none other than imperial Rome—as an agent of Satan, and he emphatically declared as much in his representation that the dragon with seven heads and ten horns gives to the beast with seven heads and ten horns "his power, and his throne, and great authority" (xiii.

2). From his standpoint the rescuing of the Christian Church from this monstrous foe was of incalculable moment. It seemed to him equivalent to the binding of Satan and the securing to Christianity an era for peaceful advance in the world. As compared with contemporary conditions such an era would have a charming aspect, and would present a scene upon which the martyrs might look down with feelings of triumph. It is from this point of view that we may reasonably construe the millennial period. Noting that it is placed in contrast with the period of Satanic assault through a persecuting and idolatrous power, we shall find no compelling occasion to regard it as a period in all respects ideal. We shall be at liberty to rate it as merely a period of free opportunity and marked advance for the cause of Christ in the world. Ascribing to it this character we cannot expect to be able to dis-

criminate its limits with any sort of exactness. At least this is the necessary assumption in so far as we are destitute of any proper warrant for interpreting the reign of Christ with the risen saints as a visible earthly reign. For us the millennium denotes simply an era of special ascendency of Christ's kingdom in the world, an era very likely introduced without any marked tokens of its arrival. To put more into the language of the Revelator is to indulge in gratuitous fancy.

5. In the point of view of the New Testament the kingdom of God is most closely associated with the person of Christ, so that the attitude toward the one essentially defines the attitude toward the other. Now, in the rounded idea of the kingdom there is a union of process and consummation. The kingdom is both present and future—present in its primary stages, future in the glorious fulfillment of its ideal. Similarly, we may think of the coming

of Christ as a union of process and consummation. He comes in every great crisis of the kingdom, such as the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, or the definitive overthrow of the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile through the downfall of the Jewish State. But beyond all these preliminary advents he is to come in that transcendent visitation which is to signalize the ushering in of the perfected kingdom, the ideal order of eternity. Thus regarded Christ's coming is seen to be both premillennial and postmillennial. As coinciding with crucial epochs of the advancing kingdom it is premillennial. Since, however, the millennium, whatever may be its character in other respects, is included in the temporal order, it is to be followed by the glorious consummating advent which heralds the arrival of the perfected kingdom, the complete installation of the realm of the incorruptible life, the

ultimate or eternal order. Naturally it was the coming of the Lord Christ in this preeminent sense which specially appealed to the hope and aspiration of prophetic spirits. It is right still to accord it a lofty primacy in Christian contemplation, though history may properly teach us to assign no little value to the advents intervening between the ascension and the great final disclosure of Him in whom we have the assurance of eternal life.

APPENDIX

THE design of these added pages is to reenforce several points which have received more or less attention in the foregoing criticism of radical Adventism or pre-millenarianism. We wish to strengthen the case against this doctrinal scheme by giving further consideration in particular to four grounds of challenge. These may be stated as follows: (1) A forcing of Old Testament prophecy; (2) an arbitrary intrusion into the New Testament of a sense favorable to the pre-millennial thesis; (3) a drastic disparagement of the vocation of Christianity over against the interest and the office of Jewish nationality; (4) a combination of intemperate pessimism with a most extravagant optimism. In developing these grounds of challenge we shall have but slight occasion to take specific account of parties which bear the name

of "Adventists." Our reference will be directed mainly to theories about the second advent which have been propagated in the larger communions. It will serve our convenience to make no inconsiderable use of the "Scofield Reference Bible," an annotated version of the Scriptures, in which a stalwart type of pre-millenarianism is asserted with untiring industry and unfailing dogmatic confidence.

I

As has been noticed, pre-millenarians are wont to advocate the broad proposition that for the Old Testament prophecies relative to the future of Israel an essentially literal fulfillment is to be expected, and that consequently where such an order of fulfillment is not discoverable, either in the restoration from the Babylonish captivity or at the first advent of Christ, the prophecies must be supposed to contemplate events which are to occur in

connection with Christ's second advent. That an element of temerity lies in such sweeping assumptions is suggested, in the first place, by the plain, undeniable fact that the prophets often used the style of impassioned oratory and employed stronger terms than would be admissible in plain prose. Take a few illustrations. In the book of Daniel (ii. 37, 38) we have a description of the rule of Nebuchadnezzar, which anyone can see quite overreaches the actual facts: "Thou, O king, art king of kings, unto whom the God of heaven hath given the kingdom, the power, and the strength, and the glory; and wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee to rule over them all." In the prophecy of Isaiah (xxx. 26) this description is given in emphasizing the recovery of Israel from adversity: "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the

light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days." Since the context clearly associates the predicted marvel with the age of the Pharaohs and the Assyrian monarchs, the feature of rhetorical license is perfectly evident. In the same prophecy (xi. 6–9, lxv. 25) we have a picture of the wonderful peace which is to ensue under an ideal prince from the root of Jesse: "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together: and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the basilisk's den." What is this but poetic imagination scorning all the metes and bounds of sober expectation in an effort to express the exhilaration felt over the glimpse of a

humane and righteous age in prospect? Pre-millenarian dogmatism, it is true, may make bold to apply the scale of literal interpretation even to this passage, but in so doing it can only publish its exegetical eccentricity and its readiness to postulate a boundless magic. We see, then, that stress upon the literal fulfillment of the prophecies respecting Israel's future may easily pass the just bounds. Large account is rationally taken of the prophetical dialect. Credibility is thus given to the point of view which we have advocated (pp. 74–81), namely, that even the most glowing prophecies have their essential meaning realized in the marvelous recovery of the Jewish people from Assyrian and Babylonian woes, and its utilization as the household in which the Prince of Peace was born, and from out of which he inaugurated a dispensation worthy in its principles to be the consummating dispensation, at least this side of eternity.

That the pre-millennial theory is seriously astray in its emphasis on the literal fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy is evidenced again by the fact that prominent advocates of it are revealed as under stress to contradict their own premises. This is conspicuously the case with the authors of the notes in the Scofield Reference Bible.[1] Here we find the perfectly explicit declaration that the kingdom of restored Israel, which is to be set up by the reappearing Christ, is to be temporary (pp. 1227, 1330, 1341). "The tribulation," we read, "is brought to an end by the appearing of the Lord and the battle of Armageddon. The kingdom follows; after this the 'little season,' and then eternity." "The dispensation of the kingdom begins with the return of Christ to the earth, runs through the 'thousand years' of his earth-rule, and ends when he has delivered up the

[1] Edited by C. I. Scofield, the consulting editors being Henry G. Weston, James M. Gray, William J. Erdman, W. G. Moorehead, Elmore Harris, Arno C. Gaebelein, Arthur T. Pierson. We have used the edition of 1917.

kingdom to the Father." Now, compare this order of statements with the assertion of Daniel that the kingdom which is to be set up in the days of the ten kings is to stand *for ever* (ii. 44, vii. 14); with the promise voiced by Ezekiel that the Israelites are to dwell in the land *for ever*, and David is to be their prince *for ever* (xxxvii. 24, 25); with Joel's pronouncement that Judah shall dwell *for ever* (iii. 20); and finally (passing for the moment into the New Testament domain) with Luke's declaration that Christ's reign over the house of Jacob is to be *for ever*, and of his kingdom there shall be *no end* (i. 33). What is the paltry interval of a thousand years allowed by the "Reference Bible," as the period of the kingdom, over against the everlasting duration asserted for the very same kingdom in prophetical discourse? One of two things follows unavoidably. Either the editors of the Reference Bible must in consistency recall their conclusions on

the duration of the Messianic kingdom, or else consent to modify the dictum on the literal fulfillment of prophecy.

Once more, that pre-millenarians are chargeable with forcing Old Testament prophecy may be seen in the numerous instances in which they arbitrarily carry over prophetical utterances to a far distant application. As has been observed (pp. 92–97), they proceed on the twofold assumption that the book of Daniel under the designation of the "fourth kingdom" depicts the Roman empire, and that the ten kings who are mentioned denote the kingdoms into which that empire was parceled out. To neither phase of the assumption do they afford such support as is necessary to found any sort of intellectual confidence in the face of the powerful challenge of recent scholarship, with its solid reasons for identifying the fourth kingdom with the Greek empire of Alexander and his successors and for refusing to transmute

the ten kings into ten kingdoms. Thus they build upon an utterly precarious, not to say plainly mistaken, basis in reading into the descriptions of the book of Daniel any details whatever of remote history—history reaching into the modern era.

To this cardinal instance of disjunction from the probable field of prophecy many other illustrations can be added. We select the following list from the Scofield Reference Bible. Chapters xv and xvi in the prophecy of Isaiah, though implicated throughout with local and temporary conditions, are made to include a reference to the world-battle which is to occur in the far-off period following the second advent. A like reference is foisted into chapter xvii, which treats of the desolation prepared for Damascus. In face of their allusions to a contemporary disposition of nationalities and to modes of warfare already antiquated, chapters xxxviii and xxxix in Ezekiel

are made to refer to events both at the beginning and the conclusion of the millennial kingdom-age. While it is granted that in Daniel, chapter xi, the reference up to the thirty-sixth verse is to Antiochus Epiphanes, the implacable persecutor of the Jews in the second century before Christ, it is contended that from that point we have a portraiture of the portentous antichrist who is to operate thousands of years later on the eve of Christ's glorious coming. That such particulars enter into the passage as the escape of Edom and Moab and the chief of the children of Ammon is not counted as any bar to its application to a field in connection with which these obsolete parties can have no possible significance. The declaration of Amos (i. 2) that the Lord shall roar from Zion is made to include a prediction of the destruction of the Gentile powers which is to occur at the second advent. Amos, to be sure, names as

objects of the divine judgment only parties on the field in his day. The editors of the Reference Bible, so far as can be made out, are simply following their own preference in giving to his words a far distant application.

With all the rest, pre-millenarians take inadequate account of the conditional element in the prophetic forecasts of Israel's fortune. It seemingly makes no strain upon them to appeal to this element to cancel for thousands of years the fulfillment of the Baptist's declaration that the kingdom of heaven was at hand.[1] What warrant have they then, on the basis of self-consistency, to construe every prospect sketched in the glowing rhetoric of poet-prophets as destined to literal fulfillment? The conditional element which they themselves are forced to admit, to the practical negation of the Baptist's declaration, may conceivably have a much wider application. A being supremely moral

[1] Scofield Reference Bible, p. 996.

cannot be supposed to make unconditional promises of blessings and dignities which are intrinsically dependent upon the conduct and inner state of moral agents.

We see, therefore, that radical pre-millenarianism is clearly convicted of rash and unwarrantable inductions from the Old Testament representations.

II

Carrying our criticism into the New Testament domain, we notice in the first instance that pre-millenarians are much inclined to secure an illegitimate sanction for their scheme by refusing to discriminate properly between the initial and the matured standpoint of the New Testament community. A position which possibly may have been taken prior to any adequate period of reflection and experience of world conditions carries no such credentials as one prefaced by a good amount of

both reflection and experience. It is well known that in later Judaism the apocalyptic externalized conception of the kingdom of God was rife. This conception had doubtless been woven into the thought and feeling of the first disciples. Should we find, then, one or more tokens that they did not all at once transcend it, we ought not to be surprised. A community that did not yet know how to construe its relation to the Mosaic law might very well be in the fog as respects the proper attitude toward other phases of contemporary Judaism. The doctrinally important fact is that the inferior Judaic conception of the kingdom, if indeed it ever had place in the Christian community, was clearly transcended. Paul unmistakably rose above its plane. In the whole range of his eschatology there is not a hint that he made any room for the idea of an earthly Judaic kingdom under the visible headship of Christ. It may not be improbable

that in the first instance he had a larger appreciation for the apocalyptic order of representation than that which he entertained later. A comparison of the Thessalonian Epistles with those addressed to the Colossians and the Ephesians might perhaps suggest this much. But in all of his Epistles, the earliest as well as the latest, he keeps perfectly clear of all reference to a visible Judaic kingdom and to a Christ seated upon an earthly throne. An equal transcendence of these conceptions is characteristic of the Johannine Gospel and Epistles. At the doctrinal summits of the New Testament nothing of this kind appears.

The attempt of pre-millenarians to evade the force of this great fact by predicating a twofold future coming of Christ—one phase being connected with the "rapture" of the saints, the other with the establishment of a visible kingdom—and by associating the Pauline and Johannine representa-

tions with the former phase, is without discoverable warrant. The rapture of the saints, in the pre-millennial sense of a transference of the whole body of true believers in the world to a celestial sphere, while yet mundane affairs keep on their course, is nowhere taught in the New Testament. Even the oft-cited passage in Revelation, xx. 4, 5, contains no such doctrine; it merely specifies that a select company, made up of the victims of violent persecution, are to anticipate the resurrection of the great body of the dead. As for the Pauline representations, connecting as they do the transformation of the living and the resurrection of the dead with the abolition of death and the investment with immortality (1 Cor. xv), they manifestly are designed to depict a final stage in the world drama. To make them serve as a prelude to a visible earthly kingdom is to intrude something entirely alien to the apostle's discourse.

A second ground of criticism is furnished by the way in which various New Testament texts are handled, to the end of finding in them sanctions for the pre-millenarian tenet. A very arresting example is the contention in the Scofield Reference Bible that Matthew's phrase, the "kingdom of heaven," denotes uniformly the Judaic kingdom, which is to be set up with Jerusalem as its center and Christ as its visible head, while the similar phrase, "kingdom of God"—used sparingly by Matthew and abundantly by Mark and Luke—designates the general realm of moral intelligences over which God is supreme Sovereign.[1] This is a marvel in exegesis. It is refuted by the utter improbability that a theme reported upon by Matthew more than a score of times should have no place in the companion Gospels; by the fact that Matthew uses the term

[1] Pages 996, 1003. We notice that a prominent representative at the Prophetical Conference of 1918 discarded this interpretation (Proceedings, pp. 343, 344).

"kingdom of heaven" in statements not at all appropriate to describe the relation to a visible earthly realm;[1] by decisive evidences that Mark and Luke, in reporting the identical discourses in which Matthew inserts the phrase "kingdom of heaven," impute to Christ the use of the words "kingdom of God."[2] The plain demand of exegetical and historical sobriety is the conclusion that Christ very likely used the terms interchangeably, and that in any case it is perfectly gratuitous to read into Matthew's preferred term any positive intention to designate a visible Judaic kingdom.

Other instances of the forcing of such meanings upon New Testament texts as are agreeable to the pre-millenarian dogma could easily be cited. We afford space to only a few of these. In the early chapters of the book of Reve-

[1] Matt. v. 3, 20; vii. 21; xiii. 52; xviii. 1–4; xxiii. 13; xxv. 1.

[2] Compare Matt. v. 3 with Luke vi. 20; Matt. xi. 11, 12 with Luke vii. 28; Matt. xiii. 31 with Mark iv. 30–32 and Luke xiii. 18, 19; Matt. xiii. 33 with Luke xiii. 20, 21; Matt. xviii. 1–4 with Luke xviii. 16, 17.

lation admonitory addresses are given to seven different local churches in proconsular Asia. Quite possibly the types represented by these different churches may be approximated by one or another section of Christendom in later times. But what ground can be discovered for affirming here an intended reference to successive stages in the historic evolution of Christianity? We can discern no ground whatever, outside of the ambition of the premillenarian advocate to make prophecy accord with the long-time measures which are agreeable to his theory.

A like remark applies to the insistent demand to transmute the ten kings mentioned in Revelation xviii into ten kingdoms viewed as surviving portions of the Roman empire. On this point we have already said what suffices for our purpose (pp. 97–100). We merely take occasion to pen a word of comment on the eccentricity of an attempt

to revive and make significant for the present outlook a chart of world powers as remote from the actual conditions as are the postulates of the Ptolemaic system from the astronomy recognized by the scientists of to-day. What confronts us is not the several members of an effete empire on European soil, but mighty nations in the Orient and the American Occident, as well as in Europe, which are obliged to take serious account of one another.

Let one more instance of forced interpretation receive our notice. We refer to Revelation xx. 1–6, the passage which speaks of the saints—a certain company of them—reigning with Christ for a thousand years. This, as has been indicated (pp. 138–142), is the sole basis in the New Testament for the doctrine of the millennial kingdom. That it was designed to affirm some sort of triumphal experience of a martyr host, for an appreciable period, is quite evident. But who is qualified

to assert beyond all peradventure that it was meant to depict a visible reign upon a distinctively earthly theater? The Revelator says not a syllable about the location of the reigning Christ and of the saints associated with him. Some reputable commentators think he had reference to a visible earthly theater; other reputable commentators conclude that he designed to set forth in dramatic form a rule having its seat in the heavenly sphere. From the terms which he employs it is impossible to derive materials for a perfectly certain choice between the alternative interpretations. So the technical doctrine of the millennial kingdom cannot claim so much as one unambiguous text in the New Testament. The fact is that doctrine is not built upon New Testament authority, but, rather, upon such a construction of Old Testament references to the future of Israel as may well be counted gratuitous and forced.

III

The next count against pre-millenarianism which we propose to consider is its radical disparagement of the vocation of Christianity over against the interest and the office of Jewish nationality. In dealing with this topic it is not at all necessary to challenge the idea that the Jewish nation was given a special call and a special training in order to qualify it to prepare for the consummating revelation of truth and grace in Jesus Christ. What is required is that with Paul we clearly recognize that this nation was not favored on its own account, but chosen to serve as an instrument and a forerunner. In the fulfillment of its office as a forerunner—to repeat a foregoing statement (pp. 142–145)—it should have embraced the sentiment uttered with no less wisdom than humility by John the Baptist in expression of his relation to Christ: "He must increase,

but I must decrease." The tragedy of the situation was that for the most part it haughtily rejected this attitude and stubbornly insisted that Jehovah was bound in perpetuity to give it a regnant position in the world. An aggravation of that tragedy will be the outcome of the characteristic contentions of various pre-millenarians, unless, indeed, the Jews should be gifted with a much better discretion than is shown by the Gentiles who paint their predestined lot and function in such strong terms. Unquestionably, the terms used are supremely adapted to nurture a worse arrogance than was shown by the advocates of Prussian policy at the opening of the great war.

Among the treatises which immensely exalt the future mission and standing of the Jewish people, none, so far as we have observed, is more explicit than the Scofield Reference Bible. We are here told that Israel is always

the center of the divine counsels earthward (pp. 722, 1204). We are invited to believe that in virtue of the central and privileged position of this people the most violent cursings in the imprecatory psalms are "appropriate and right" (p. 599)—a judgment which evidently allows nationality to outlaw humanity and sanctifies rules of action which the progress of civilization inevitably puts under the ban. Respecting the great assize described in Matt. xxv we are asked to recognize in the awards mentioned nothing else than blessings and woes pronounced upon the Gentile nations according to their treatment of a remnant of Christ's national kinsmen, the Jews (p. 1036)—a point of view which is in amazing contrast with the declaration of Christ, that "whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother," and which also sends to the scrap heap Paul's view on the need of no longer knowing Christ

after the flesh.[1] The message of judgment against the Gentile world powers, we are informed, is fitly called the "everlasting Gospel" (Rev. xiv. 6), since it is good news to the Jews, besides being a righteous visitation upon powers which are dominated by Satanic principles (pp. 1342, 1343).

With entire sobriety it can be said that this very industriously doctored Bible makes Christianity in the course of this world's history a mere episode, interlude, or "parenthesis," as one writer has named it.[2] Quite in harmony with this rating is the verdict that during the period of the millennial kingdom the Sabbath (or seventh-day) observance will be in force (p. 1011). With like consistency, it is admitted that even the old sacrificial system, at least in characteristic par-

[1] The given interpretation of the judgment scene appears not to be exceptional among pre-millenarians. We find a speaker at the Prophetical Conference of 1918 taking it for a settled matter that the tremendous awards depicted in Matt. xxv are to be understood as rendered to the nations "according to their conduct in relation to the Lord's brethren, the Jews" (Proceedings, p. 270).

[2] W. E. Blackstone, Jesus Is Coming, p. 202.

ticulars, will be revived (p. 890), an inference which the editors of the Reference Bible could not well escape on their plan of interpreting prophecy.[1] Blackstone declares that the Levitical sacrifices and form of worship, with some modifications, will be reestablished.[2]

In the above there is no design to imply that all pre-millenarians stand on the same level as respects emphasis on the destined primacy of the Jews. It would be unfair not to notice that considerable distinctions obtain among them, at least in point of open unequivocal declarations. What can legitimately be said is that pre-millenarianism at *the worst* involves in this connection a decidedly obnoxious element. Unwittingly it compromises a normal theistic conception, thrusting God down from the plane of the infinite reason and the infinite righteousness, and representing him as

[1] Note such texts as Joel ii. 14 and Zech. xiv. 16–21.
[2] Blackstone, pp. 191, 192.

so governed by an arbitrary and inexplicable partiality that he is led to shape the administration of the world preeminently for its satisfaction.

The growing prospect of a Palestinian state under Jewish direction is not infrequently taken by ardent premillenarians as a cheering sign that the millennial kingdom is about to be established, and an ideal age is very soon to dawn. It is hardly necessary to remark that from our point of view we cannot second these glowing anticipations. In all likelihood the force of age-long associations will incline a fraction of the Jewish people to improve an opportunity to settle in Palestine. But this perfectly natural result of explainable causes affords no promise of any remarkable outcome. A paltry Jewish state in Palestine will not be endowed with any omnipotent gift for remaking the world. The supposition that God will loan to it his omnipotence, and will drive all competitors to

the wall, may, of course, help out the faith of those who are determined to have their millennial scheme fulfilled. But the supposition involves a certain incongruity. If the Jewish state is restored, it will be, according to all appearances, through the magnanimity of the Gentile world powers, and it will owe its conservation, at least initially, to their kindly support. For omnipotence, therefore, in its partiality for Jewish nationality, to crush and destroy these powers would not have quite the appearance of a fair and reputable transaction.

IV

It remains to notice briefly the peculiar combination in the premillenarian scheme of an intemperate pessimism with an extravagant optimism. The former phase has been commented upon in some measure (pp. 19–27), but is so very characteristic that further illustration would not be

difficult. A writer whose exuberant rhetoric is quite capable of affording entertainment gives this description of civilization: "The thing we call civilization is so tangled that the juggernaut which carries a few up the hill crushes the multitudes under its wheels."[1] A description scarcely more complimentary is thus phrased: "On every hand are evidences of the moral failure of civilization. After twenty centuries the utmost that civilization can do is to perfect the machinery for the destruction of human life and to direct its use."[2] At the Prophetical Conference of 1918 this judgment was expressed: "We are members of a fallen and a falling race. The world is in deeper spiritual darkness to-day than ever before."[3] A statement which both emphasizes and explains this abject failure of civilization is presented to us in the Scofield Reference Bible,

[1] C. F. Wimberly, Behold the Morning! p. 22.
[2] J. S. Holden, Will the Christ Return? p. 13.
[3] Proceedings, p. 269.

where we meet the succinct proposition that Satan is the prince and god of the present world system (pp. 726, 1350). By the same authority we are informed that the world on its ecclesiastical side is about as remote from God and righteousness as on its political side. The visible church, while inclosing some saints, is very largely given over to irremediable apostasy (pp. 1276, 1281, 1346). So small is the godly remnant that its disappearance from earthly society, in the "rapture," at the coming of Christ, will not be noticed very much.[1]

The terms in which pre-millenarians express their pessimistic estimate of the present world order are quite matched by the high-pitched optimism with which they contemplate the millennial kingdom which is to be set up under the visible headship of Christ. Very pronounced expressions of this feature in their scheme have been given (pp. 33–35), so that we find

[1] Holden, Will the Christ Return? pp. 27, 61, 62.

occasion to add only a few sentences from very recent books. In that marvelous millennial era, we are told, "the whole of the Jewish nation, as a nation, will be converted." Satan will be bound. "No more temptation! No more of the malignant work of the devil in the world! . . . Christ's sovereignty and sway will be universal."[1] "The earth will once more be arrayed in fertility and beauty, as well as abundance. . . . The curse will be lifted also from the animal kingdom. . . . The lion will no longer crave blood, but will eat grass as an ox. . . . There will be a reign of universal peace among men. The whole world will be like one large, happy family: racial, social, religious, and financial differences will be set aside. Blessed communion will abound; life will be prolonged with such environment—and naturally so—until death will be scarcely known."[2]

[1] Holden, Will the Christ Return? pp. 65–67.
[2] Wimberly, Behold the Morning, pp. 186–188.

Now, what will be the logical result of the conjunction of such utter pessimism with such headlong optimism? On the one hand you have complete despair of the present world order, stalwart repudiation of the idea that the nations now installed on the world theater can work out any tolerable conditions, outspoken assertion that their destined and deserved fate is unqualified destruction. On the other hand you have unbounded hope, dogmatic assurance that the millennial kingdom will right all wrongs in the world, annul all distresses, and open all the fountains of longed-for blessings. Will men be incited to labor earnestly to reform the present world order when it is accepted as indubitable truth that this order cannot be amended, and is predestined, short of the millennial dawn, to go on from bad to worse? Will men place a high estimate upon civic and patriotic obligations, and cheerfully sacrifice themselves for the

safety, conservation, and well-being of their nation when it is stoutly affirmed that such nation, as belonging to a system dominated by Satanic principles, stands squarely in the way of the divine kingdom, and must be thrust out of existence, in order that this kingdom in its millennial glory should be installed in the earth? The logical result, we claim, is quite obvious. You cannot logically build an effective ambition to reform the world upon the extinction of all faith in the possibility of reformation. You cannot logically vivify the sense of patriotic duty in citizens whose creed requires them to rate their nation as essentially part and parcel of a Satanic domain. And the task is made logically all the more unpromising by the pre-millenarian affirmation that the one effective expedient to rescue the world from evil and to bless it with all desirable good, namely, the setting up of the millennial kingdom under Christ's visible

headship, is in all probability close at hand.[1] Why vex oneself over reform schemes, or make great sacrifices to promote the weal of the nation and to assure its perpetuity, when it can legitimately be expected that the kingdom which is to cancel the career of all existing nations, and to banish all existing evils, is about to appear?

We have spoken of the logical implications of the radical pre-millenarian theory. It is utterly remote from our purpose to deny to the advocates of this theory the privilege of being inconsistent. Indeed, we not only credit them as a body with a good degree of

[1] Under the stimulus of the recent world-war zealous pre-millenarians have not infrequently ventured to express the conviction that the time is drawing near for the visible coming of Christ. The two writers last cited are examples. A very notable expression of this conviction is contained in a public statement by a group of religious teachers in England. At the beginning of their outspoken pre-millenarian program these well-known men make the following points: (1) "That the present crisis points toward the close of the times of the Gentiles. (2) That the revelation of our Lord may be expected at any moment, when he will be manifested as evidently to his disciples as on the evening of his resurrection." An American counterpart to this manifesto was given forth a little later by the Prophetical Conference which met in Philadelphia in 1918. "We believe," affirms the Conference, "that our Lord's prophetic Word is at this moment finding remarkable fulfillment, and that it does indicate the nearness of the close of the age, and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (page 12 in the Proceedings of the Conference, published under the title Light on Prophecy. See also pp. 32, 142, 211).

earnest piety, but are very ready to assume that a large proportion of them are disposed to respond faithfully to the demands of alert citizenship and of patriotic devotion. It remains true, nevertheless, that in *the long run* the bond between theory and practice cannot be annulled, and that a fantastic hope is no substitute for a resolute and persevering use of available means of social, moral, and religious betterment. Pre-millenarianism loses the higher point of view when it forsakes the spiritual agencies set in motion by the obedient and suffering Son of God, and centers its expectation upon the intrusion of supernatural force. That was a true word which was spoken by J. W. Buckham when he said: "The cross means nothing unless it be reliance upon spiritual forces as against physical."

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